

‘A MINE OF GOLD’

A Celebration of 150 years
in the service of
Catholic Education on the Wirral
by the
Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus
1849—1999

Mary Campion McCarren fcJ

Table of Contents

Introduction

Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus invited to the Wirral: Lingdale (1849) Birkenhead (1852) Chester (1854)	1
The Devotional Life of the Schools: the beginnings of traditions: Marian elements; Processions; Quarante Ore; Sacred Heart; Saints; Guilds and Sodalities.	22
Other Religious Matters: Sacraments and Sacramentals; Death and Dying; Chapel Buildings	34
Prize Days: Programmes, Episcopal Messages; Civic Links	46
Elementary Education: the position of Church (1852) and State: Chester, Birkenhead; St Joseph's Upton 1863 -1965	55
Night Schools 1879 -1902	70
Birkenhead and Upton. Payment by Results	
Outreach:	78
Workhouses; Refuge for Girls; Work for Poor Missions.	
Inservice Training for the Sisters: Miss Scott; Certification	85
Development of Holt Hill and Upton Hall	89
Marking Royal Jubilees and Deaths 1887–1910:	98
The growing integration of Religious in national life.	
World Wars:	102
their immediate and long term effects on Communities and Schools.	
Where History Gives Way to Memory	125
Envoi	142

INTRODUCTION

Looking back over 150 years can prove a daunting task. Although one's fundamental vision may be the same as the people who lived then, its external manifestations can be very different. In many ways those women and men lived in a world very foreign to our own. Our ideas are not the same as theirs. They speak a different language when talking of matters religious, educational and artistic. Class distinctions, distinctions even between classes of sister within religious life grate today; apologetics which allow for no contradiction seem a strange tool for 'religious education'; monastic elements in the life of an apostolically active order seem almost improbable and yet the women whose lives were lived in that way were great women.

Despite the stereotypic images, they were among the best educated women of their day; despite the apparent strictness of the regime, they cared for the children confided to them with compassion and many of them worked themselves into early graves. The class sizes in many situations may shout 'overcrowded' but to the sympathetic eye they cannot spell failure. Like all church archives, the documents which record their story, record the presence of the grace of God in history.

The image of tapestry tells us that our forebears could not see the pattern; we are the living and 'the living are the latest threads in the design and they cannot see where the pattern is going.'¹ It ill becomes us to think we are the last word!

This subjective survey of the work of the Sisters Faithful Companions of Jesus on the Wirral 1849 -1999 shows there are many constants. It is not a history in any accepted sense; rather a potpourri, a kaleidoscope of gleanings which it is hoped will both celebrate the past, give some pleasure in the present and offer encouragement in a world of change.

Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus

Invited to the Wirral

Lingdale (1849), Birkenhead (1852) Chester (1854)

Invited to Liverpool: 1844

Five years after the arrival of the Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus in Liverpool in 1844, a second foundation was made, this time on the Wirral in what is variously described as Oxton, Claughton or Birkenhead.

The foundress had answered Fr Parker's invitation to take charge of the Parish School at St Patrick's, Liverpool, and at the same time founded a Boarding School at Gt George's Square; in 1849 she responded to the Vicar Apostolic's suggestion that she transfer part of that Boarding School to a more salubrious neighbourhood since deadly epidemics were raging in Liverpool. Dr. Brown invited her to make a foundation across the Mersey. He specifically asked for a 'First Class' Boarding School which she provided and having done so, opened an elementary school, or a Poor School, as the terminology of the time has it.

1820: the Foundation of the Society

Marie Madeleine d'Houët, had founded the Society in Amiens, France in 1820 in response to the invitation which motivated her in accepting all that were to follow. She had heard the words 'I thirst' as she waited for Mass on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in 1817 and very soon understood what the driving force of her life was to be. She was to be a companion of Jesus, seeking like him and with him to alleviate the thirsts of his people in the contemporary world. He himself had made it clear during his lifetime that his own great thirst was to draw everyone to his Father and that his disciples would help accomplish that by their loving service of others.

The Foundress' life experience

As the daughter of royalist parents Marie Madeleine had known what it was to have a father imprisoned and, as their eldest child, to have to assume responsibilities in the upbringing of younger children; as the possessor of an old and respected name she had not been slow, after the Revolutionary upheavals, to use her influence to better the conditions of the sick and infirm in the Hospice of Issoudun and the prisons of Bourges. As loved and loving wife, as widow even before their child was born, as doting mother of that child, beset by post-natal depression and anxieties and knowing the criticisms of a demanding mother-in-law; as conscientious administrator of property and moneys, as landowner responsible for the well-being of tenants, she was well aware of many of the great perennial needs of human beings.

Perennial human needs

In post-Revolutionary France the most basic needs were in the sphere of education and when she arrived in England in 1830, Marie Madeleine found the same needs springing from different causes. Religious education was a need across the social spectrum and so too was schooling, though the content of that schooling would differ according to status. For those of the upper class there was need to awaken them to their responsibilities, to form social consciences; for others there was need of skills and tools to enable them to earn a decent living. For all of them there was the need to discover their true worth as children of the Father.

Once her Sisters had arrived in Liverpool, Marie Madeleine found ever expanding numbers of Irish immigrants living in great poverty, sickness and hardship; uneducated and unskilled, thanks to the Penal Laws; speaking in many cases no English; unable for the most part to get work and what work there was transitory and ill paid; the victims of prejudice on grounds both of nationality and creed; deprived of religious instruction and the opportunity to practise their religion. Their needs and the needs of their children were great.

The Liverpool foundation was a sign of things to come as in the next fifty years the Society spread to other industrial towns of the North serving all classes of people.

Lingdale 1849-1863

Lingdale House (Oxton, Claughton or Birkenhead) was on the market for renting. It is variously described as being '*situated on top of a beautiful hill, to the West the Irish Sea, to the East the river Mersey and from mid-day, to the West, the Welsh Hills*', '*An elegant house with 6 acres of gardens; terraces, lawns, groves and flower beds... a forest of pine trees as far as Bidston Road on one side and Palm Grove on the other.*'

The Laity Directory of 1850 pointed out to prospective parents that '*the distance from Liverpool is very convenient; the Woodside steamboats cross the river every 10 minutes and at the ferry every convenience may be had by either omnibus or car.*'

The Society lawyer was Mr John Yates of Liverpool.¹ His instructions were to discover whether Lingdale was for sale without saying that he had been asked to do this. Negotiations which took almost a year were complicated by the fact that there were two so-called proprietors. In 1837, John, Earl of Shrewsbury had leased the estate to William Ravenscroft for 99 years and in 1846 sold the property to a Mr Potter subject to the same lease. In the end the idea of buying the property was dropped and Lingdale was rented.

It was taken by the Sisters on a 14 year lease with an expectation of renewal or even outright purchase. The terms of the agreement state that the rent was to be £175 of lawful British money to be paid in even portions quarterly. The lease also includes terms of good husbandry. (*They will and shall dig and get at such place within the township of Oxton aforesaid as the said Earl... or the said William Ravenscroft... shall appoint good and sufficient marl and cart and spread the same in a good husbandlike manner to and upon the said garden so that the same shall be marled at the rate of two loads of marl for each statute acre...*)

The lease was signed on September 14th, 1849 and on October 10th twelve Sisters and twenty-four pupils transferred from Gt George's Square to Lingdale House.

¹ He later figured in the debates with Bishop Goss over the Clarence Reformatory Ship. His daughter, clearly her father's child, having been educated at Lingdale, later became one of the business figures of the Society.

New beginnings

It was the first school of its type in this part of the country; Mother Frances Gibson, later Provincial in England, whose forebears included two 18th century Vicars Apostolic² used to say: *All my ancestors were brought up at the Bar (Convent, York) but I was sent to Lingdale because it was nearer my home in Manchester.*

Not only was it the first school of its type but the FCJs were the first women religious in Cheshire since the Reformation. In his Diary for 1851 Bishop Brown wrote: *The only community of nuns was at Lingdale House near Birkenhead. Mother Clotilde Dupone³, Superior first of Lingdale and then of Upton, wrote that in the beginning we ‘were not altogether welcome here—several times our house was threatened. Gradually this animosity has ceased and now we receive all that is amiable from those who initially were the most ill-disposed to us. Ministers and others.’*

The ‘Birkenhead Riots’ of 1850, following the Restoration of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy, and the part played by the Rev. Edward Browne, Pastor of St Werburgh’s live on in local folk lore.

Evidence of the general attitude towards the Sisters may be deduced from a Report in the Birkenhead Advertiser, April 1864, of an address by the Reverend P.L. Sandberg.

‘We live in dangerous times, in times when the inspiration of God’s word is questioned. Did you ever see ladies in Birkenhead wearing a very peculiar dress, in long black cloaks and long black veils and so forth⁴? If you did happen in passing to look under their hoods from curiosity, or thinking that you had met a friend, or into their faces, did they not always hide their

2 Also at Lingdale was the niece of Bishop Ullathome. When he visited in October 1859 he declared himself well pleased with his nieces—M. Stanislaus Holme was in the community, Annie Ullathome a pupil in the school.

3 M. Julie Guillemet administered the Society until the appointment of M. Josephine Petit. She was a member of the Chapter which elected M. Josephine and M. Marie de Bussy as second and third General Superiors respectively. Described as ‘a charming and attractive personality’, M. Clotilde died April 2nd 1870 at Gumley, having gone from Upton earlier in the year ‘for a change of air’.

4 In 1918 it was said in Rome that the FCJs were known for two things—their ugly dress and their beautiful spirit.

faces? (Hear, hear). Now if the Protestants were not busy, those ladies were. (Hear, hear). I can assure the Meeting that those ladies crept into Birkenhead stealthily and were doing a work not the work of God, I am sorry to say, but a work proving that, if Protestants would not labour, the enemy labours (Hear hear) and scatters the seed which will germinate into the destruction of souls far and wide in Birkenhead as it has throughout the whole land.'

In the mid-nineteenth century, Catholicism, convent life and foreigners were all highly suspect. The early 1850s were marked by a growing public campaign to secure state inspection of convents, both Anglican and Roman, on the grounds that '*factories, prisons, mines, workhouses and madhouses had to be open to public scrutiny so why not convents too?*'⁵

The first community of twelve included French, English, Italian and German Sisters, an internationality which made it possible to say that the various languages were taught by native speakers. Nonetheless they were considered a French community; their official language in writing to their General Superior was French and Bishop Brown wrote asking M. Clotilde to make his apologies to the Reverend Mother General '*for not replying to her polite note direct and in person, but I fear that perhaps my French might not be intelligible.*'⁶

Over the years, the composition of the Community changed; English became its chief language and the second General Superior, R. M. Josephine Petit, had to ask Mother Clotilde, whose naturalisation had come through in November 1849 to write in French; she replied in 1864 that she could no longer speak or write '*the French of the Academy having been in England so long*' and had long since stopped writing out and reading her confession—putting the English on one side, the French on the other!⁷

5 G.F.A. Best 'Popular Protestantism in Victorian Britain' in R. Robson (ed.) 'Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain' (London 1967 P.128) Quoted M. McLelland CAS 1996

6 Macclesfield June 2/5

7 In 1907 one of the community in Chester remarked to an Ursuline Sister exiled from Rouen how difficult it must be to learn and teach in a foreign tongue. 'Oh,' said the good Sister, 'one learns a language very quickly when one is in want of it—a lesson the FCJs had themselves learned more than half a century before. (Annals)

It was not only residence in England but also the increasing number of specifically English vocations, first from Gt George's Square, and then very quickly from Lingdale itself and then Birkenhead, that changed the profile of the community. At the same time, there were a number of Irish vocations, some directly from Ireland, others from families living in the area.

Curriculum

At Lingdale, according to the Advertisement in the Laity Directory, 1850,

*'The French, English, Italian and German Languages are taught by natives. The French language is chiefly spoken, and as the ladies of the house are principally of that nation, it may not improperly be called a French establishment. In addition to languages 'the use of the Globes, Botany, History, Writing, Arithmetic, useful and ornamental needlework.'*⁸

The fees £28 p.a., Music, Drawing and Dancing extras.'

*A vacation is allowed at Midsummer but no extra charge is made for young ladies who remain at the establishment during that period.*⁹

The mention of 'needlework both useful and ornamental' is significant in the light of Rock's **Church of Our Fathers** (1849–54)¹⁰.

Let us hope that such of our Catholic ladies as have the time, the talents and the means, may soon begin to follow that good example set them by their high-born Anglo-Saxon, their Norman and their later English sisters in the faith. Then, indeed, the never-ending working of fire-screens and slippers will sometimes, at least, give way to a stole, or maniple, or the figured orphrey for a cope or a chasuble, if not to a pall, storied with passages from Holy Writ, or the life of patron saint, to be hung during festivals upon the chancel walls, or before the altar as a frontal.

8 Books and Music were brought from France

9 This practice continued well into the C20. Boarding Schools were as much a home as a school. Listed in Gore 1864, Claughton had 8 Boarding Schools, Oxton 3 and Tranmere 13.

10 J.A. Hilton's N.W. Catholic History Society Selection (1992)

The useful and ornamental needlework furnished many a gift to the early Bishops of Shrewsbury and Menevia. A rochet and stole in April 1852 for Bishop J. Brown and another in 1855 elicits the following somewhat fulsome thanks:

It forms another link in that pleasing bond of gratitude with which my most sincere and affectionate regards towards my dear children at Lingdale are bound together.

The Gothic Revival aside, needlework was from the start used at Lingdale as a means of arousing social conscience. Thirty-five years after the opening of Lingdale, the YWCA attributes its founding in Birkenhead to 'the ever increasing numbers (of) young girls seeking employment in shops, and domestic service. This inflow of a growing female population stimulated the socially conscious members of our Society to seek means of providing spiritual and practical support for them.'¹¹

In the Convent school, the pupils made and distributed clothing to those in need and in time contributed dozens of garments for the Catholic Needle-work Guild.

Double thrust

Marie Madeleine had gone to Liverpool for the Poor School and founded a Boarding School. At Lingdale she came for the Boarding School but immediately founded a Poor School. She believed that God blessed the one in proportion to the zeal with which the Sisters worked in the other. Bishop Brown's Diary notes that the 'FCJ derived their support from a Boarding School and also maintained a Poor School for the benefit of the neighbourhood'.¹²

In reading the Annals of this period one needs to be sympathetic to the Victorian mind-set and be careful not to look at their world with 20th century

11 A History of the Birkenhead YWCA 1883-1983

12 The financial link between the two undertakings is clearly expressed in 1895. If we are obliged through lack of resources, to give up this school, sixty poor little Catholics will have to go to a Protestant school or even, what is worse, a Board School, where no Religion is taught, may be established in the village of Upton. We have begun a collection under the special protection of St Anthony, and we ask the prayers of the Society, for the success of the undertaking, as well as, for an increase in our number of boarders, which will enable us more easily to meet the outlay attendant on the alterations in the Poor School and thus continue to keep the Faith in our little village of Upton, and the surrounding country. (Upton Annals)

eyes. In a Dickensian world thronged with real people in real need, the Sisters cared compassionately for those whose lives they touched, and if the vocational training given to those in the Poor Schools fitted them and placed them as servants they were at least enabled to make their way in life. By 1874 the Sisters in Chester could say that they were '*in a position to procure excellent places for our poor children; even the Protestants address themselves to us for servants.*' It may seem to us that the conditions in which they were educated from the beginning left much to be desired and were, eventually, overcrowded but the enterprise had far reaching results.

A Parish is begun

At Lingdale, outhouses were converted and the initial hope was that 20 children might be found. But soon there were 100. And from that Poor School sprang a quasi-parish. The 1850 Laity Directory has the following entry: *Lingdale: Richard Hodgson: Mass at 10 Afn.P. at 4.*

The nuns were instructing the children and the next chaplain, Mr McCarte¹³, began to gather the parents for the same purpose. With the Bishop's approval in December 1850 he rented a simple room at Gilbrook for Sunday Mass and confessions; and there he '*broke open the bread of the Word*'. Interestingly enough Dallow records that whilst Mr McCarte said Mass at Gilbrook, confessions of females were always heard at Lingdale. All First Communions at the North End of the town, (March 1851–November 1857)¹⁴ were made at Lingdale.¹⁵ By 1853 there were 40 young people in the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception who gathered '*every Sunday and spent their afternoon in exercises of piety and innocent recreations.*' This was a pattern Madame d'Houët had established as early as 1823

13 The Title 'Father' was introduced into England for RC priests by Cardinal Manning towards the end of the nineteenth century.

14 Mr McCarte left in February 1857

15 A number of the North Wirral parishes have the FCJs in their ancestry. There was Mr McCarte's Gilbrook parish; in 1862 Canon Lennon bought 14 Chapel Street to serve as presbytery at Seacombe; Upton (1863) of course, from which in 1923 Moreton and Leasowe were separated. In 1940 Our Lady of Pity was opened at Greasby. For four years it was served from Upton when Fr William Corcoran, PP of Upton bought a site in Mill Lane and erected on it an old army hut which had served since 1919 as a church in Heswall. The first Mass in this new chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Pity was said on 5 August 1940. Sunday Mass was said by Fr Corcoran who used to walk from Upton until Rev.A. Murphy (later Archbishop of Cardiff) became the first resident priest.

when she opened the large garden in Châteauroux to women and girls. One of the aims of these gatherings and of the Association of Christian Mothers was to provide a little time and space for the women and girls ‘to throw off all thought of work and care for the time’.¹⁶

In 1857 the Poor School was transferred from Lingdale to Our Lady’s Price Street, and two FCJs continued to serve there. On good days there were between 140–160 children and spiritual instruction was given by Rev. Patrick Power.

Retreats for Ladies

The Schools were not the foundress’s only concern. The Bishops of Shrewsbury and Menevia had both called on Madame d’Houët on the occasion of her first visit in 1850 and on August 6th 1851 Bishop Brown wrote that he considered

‘the possession of such an Establishment as yours, as one the greatest blessings of the Diocese; and I beg most tenderly to assure you that it shall always form the object of my most special regard.’

Madame d’Houët spoke to the two Bishops, and to Bishop Brown of Liverpool, of her desire to offer retreats for *Ladies of the World* at Lingdale. As a young widow, Marie Madeleine had herself availed of opportunities for retreat and spiritual direction and knew the value she had found in those exercises. This was a new venture in England and the Bishops encouraged her and suggested that they be offered during the summer holidays for the upper class. Mr Lennon¹⁷ was her constant and devoted friend and helped greatly with the project. He interested several ladies so that when July 2nd 1851 arrived there were 20 retreatants (including 11 former pupils). The Retreat Master was George Spencer, Fr Ignatius CP, one of the famous Oxford Movement Converts. These summer retreats which were continued after the move from Lingdale to Upton Hall, also stimulated social consciences.

16 Chester 1900.

17 Rector Liscard 1843-68.

Why leave Lingdale?

Lingdale clearly was a good centre for the works which Marie Madeleine and her sisters had undertaken. The foundress herself believed that Lingdale was where she was meant to be; the site seemed not only ideal but almost indispensable. When she inaugurated the business of buying the house it seemed that all would go well because the contract had been signed and a '*goodly sum paid to seal the sale*'. But during the subsequent scrutiny of the deeds it became clear that the whole project would have to be suspended. She prayed and had prayers said to Our Lady and St Joseph, novenas of Masses were offered.

Marie Madeleine engaged the Bishop's support in her negotiations with the Earl of Shrewsbury on the grounds that to allow her to continue at Lingdale *would be for the glory of God and the good of a country which has His Lordship's affection*. The Bishop met with the Earl—but he is not doing any more charity this year! It is already leased to a family by his uncle.

Ironically it was on the 8th December 1857, the feast still celebrated as School Feast at Upton whither Lingdale eventually moved, that Marie Madeleine wrote giving up all idea of the property unless the difficulties could be completely resolved. But the community were so in love with Lingdale that representations continued to be made and on 19th March 1858 less than a month before her death, Marie Madeleine wrote again renouncing all idea of being able to keep Lingdale.

What were the difficulties?

An Act of Parliament of the 6th year of the Reign of George 1st (1727) contains amongst other things a Power to grant Leases for three lives and 21 years or for any term of years determinable upon the death of three lives.

By An Act of Parliament 43 Geo. III (1803) the power to grant Leases was repealed...

BUT On the 24th June 1837 John then Earl of Shrewsbury granted a Lease to William Ravenscroft for 99 years if 3 lives mentioned in the Lease should so long live.

In 1846 the Trustees of the Shrewsbury Estates sold under powers vested in them to one Wm. Potter subject to the said Lease.

When William Ravenscroft died his son, Joseph, proved the Will and in him the Leasehold term became vested In 1850 Joseph Ravenscroft sought to buy the estate subject to the Lease and of course the term then emerged It was clear that the Earl of Shrewsbury had had no power to grant the Lease and that the Lease being bad, the sale to Potter subject to it, was bad also.

There had been adverse possession since 1846.¹⁸

Where to go?

The Sisters tried to buy another property, even to buy land on which to build 'and to have an orphanage and a poor school with a night class as we do at Birkenhead and at Lingdale and a house for the chaplain and retreats (free) for the poor.'

Mr McCarte was energetic in the search locally and Bishop advised that although 'if you can procure either a house or land on which to build, nearer to Lingdale it would undoubtedly be the most advantageous... we must look round in every direction and where there are several localities before you, you can make a selection...'¹⁹

Eventually in 1863 they bought Upton Hall.

As late as 1916 we read in a Life of Reverend Mother Mary Frances Gibson:

Before entering into the transaction, the nuns visited Upton in company with Mr Yates and Mr Whitty, the well-known Liverpool Catholic lawyers. In the early sixties, the Protestant public still looked askance at nuns and convents and the thought of selling a property to such persons would have probably seemed almost disloyal, to such... Church of England folk as the Websters of Upton Hall. Mother Clotilde and her assistant, Mother Anna had therefore, to don secular costume in order to secure an entrée. A tradition (still mentioned with a smile in our communities) hands down the picture of these two elderly religious, crinolined and beflounced after the mid-Victorian mode (in the cast off worldly costume of some erstwhile

¹⁸ Extract from Summary written by John Yates

¹⁹ Oct. 13/60

fashionable postulant) driving up the now familiar avenue flanked, in those days with thujas and cypresses, and getting their first glimpse of the ‘old’ Hall. It was then almost screened by fine trees, and was surrounded with smiling parterres, conservatories, stables, outhouses and the usual appurtenances of a country gentleman’s private estate. Mr Yates and Mr Whitty followed in a second conveyance and were present to support their clients—Madame Dupont and Madame Gueno. The visit concluded satisfactorily, and having laid the transaction before the Superior General and her council, the purchase was made shortly afterwards. Concerning this visit to Upton, the two lawyers had to confess that they found it very difficult to keep their faces straight in the presence of Mr Webster, for the two nuns looked so palpably awkward in their disguise! The fact of their being foreigners alone saved the situation!

Before the school transferred from Lingdale to Upton, a three-storey building was erected, Mr Spenser of Liverpool being the architect.

Birkenhead, 1852

Happy with what was being achieved at Lingdale, the Bishop asked for more. In 1852 he asked that the Faithful Companions of Jesus would take charge of the schools in Birkenhead, and at the same time open a second class boarding school and a first class day school. The foundress recognised the need that there was for all these works since on both sides of the Mersey the middle class was growing both in numbers and significance.

Bishop Brown’s Diary records:

‘1852: During this year a filiation from Lingdale House was established in Birkenhead. The poor schools of the town were placed under the care of the Sisters, and an immediate increase in the numbers attending the School, as well as a marked improvement amongst them, was most consoling and edifying.’

In both Birkenhead and Chester, in addition to teaching the children, the Sisters also trained Pupil Teachers so ensuring a multiplier effect.

Hampden Street and Hamilton Square

The first Birkenhead house was rented in Hampden Street. The community, with M. Elizabeth Jones as Superior, moved in January 1852 and the first pupils arrived the following week. They moved from there to the corner of Hamilton Square and Price Street in 1854 and finally in 1856 bought what was then known as Tranmere Hall, later Holt Hill.

According to the 1851 Census it was owned by Thomas Warrington, Fund-holder. He was a widower and lived there with his three sons, daughter and step-daughter.

In Spring 1857 the new community and some 40 pupils made the move, though not without signs of rebellion from the pupils, some of whom feigned illness, and it took a direct intervention from the foundress to accomplish the move! By 1858 there were 50 in the boarding school and 25 in the day school. And already novices had come from the school membership.

The Hierarchy had been restored but England was still very much mission territory. In 1852 Bishop Brown wrote from Newport saying how happy he would be if the foundress could obtain a French chaplain.

As you are aware I have no seminary, and I am obliged to procure priests where I can.²⁰

Religious Instruction

Sunday Schools were a feature of parish life. Some 300 children who during the week either remained at home looking after younger children or were out selling things in the street came to Mass under the guidance of two of the Sisters and in the afternoon came again for Religious Instruction and what are called '*little exercises of piety which one tries to make as attractive as possible.*' At 6 o'clock on Sunday evenings, they were replaced by about 100

young girls, many of whom were in domestic service, who came for Instruction and to receive words of encouragement for the week ahead. From the school room they went to Church where Benediction ended the day.

By 1858 there were 240 in the parish day school, 60 in the night school²¹ and in addition religious instructions every evening for adults, with attendance varying between 300 and 400. The Sodality of Our Lady had been introduced and there were some 40 enrolled.

Converts

Both the Children of Mary and the children in the schools had their part to play in the conversion of England. The list of converts is likened to that of Notre Dame des Victoires in Paris –in fact the local clergy often referred to the school as '*Notre Dame des Victoires de Birkenhead*' This is an interesting reference since the Paris Basilica still has a large ex voto, gift of distinguished converts, expressing both their thanks and their prayer for the conversion of England.

The school was a gateway to the homes. A *Hail Mary* was said in school every hour for the conversion of the town, especially for a certain street known as the hell of Birkenhead. The local clergy urged the Sisters to Adult Education and Instruction classes were announced from Church. Some women came spontaneously and eagerly, others were led by their children, by their pinnies, with an air of triumph. Classes ended with the recitation of the rosary, again for the conversion of sinners. The first comers brought others; they told their neighbours and friends and conversions became almost every day occurrences. The women then started asking for prayers for their husbands; a list was started of names of those whose conversion was desired and the list put in an envelope in the hands of Our Lady's statue. There were novenas, there was talk at home and gradually husbands and sons began to be brought to the priests. It is recorded that the priests were willing to welcome anyone at any hour sent to them from the nuns.

21 The girls attending night school were called 'timber -merchants' (chip girls) by the local clergy.

The priests started going from house to house, all the time tapping back into the school room for the children's prayers and those of the missionary women of the evening classes. Two years later the pastor names another street as the object of combined prayer, Oak Street now being completely accounted for!²² Initially attention was focused on Irish immigrants, many of whom had had to hide their religion to obtain work, and those who had not obtained work had been so poor that they felt unable to go to church. As the Annalist says *they had forgotten not their religion but the practice of their religious duties.* Mother Scholastica Connolly who had charge of St Werburgh's School was considered by the rector to have a special grace for helping converts.²³

In the second wave, it was non-Catholics being converted, either by example or by marriage. And again the mothers played a big part in all this. Once the mother was received, the whole family often followed. England was indeed mission territory! In the Boarding and Day Schools too, there was a steady flow of converts among both children and parents.

An extraordinary occurrence.

One well documented event shows that the foundress had her own part to play in the care of the young women of the area, appearing to one whilst herself actually in France.

Mother Scholastica Connolly²⁴, testifying before the Tribunal for the Cause of Madame d'Houët says:

I have known the servant of God personally. The first time I saw her

22 St Laurence's Notice Book, May 24th 1936 announces that: After the May procession in church, the Procession will proceed into Beckwith St, Watson St, Oak St. Oak St has been specially chosen because the little girl who is to crown Our Lady resides there, and because Oak St will soon disappear as the houses are to be demolished. Oak St has played a worthy part in the development of St Laurence's parish. 'To which the Editor has added: 'This was not just a slum clearance; it was the violent rupture of a close network of deep relationships between friends and relatives. We are paying the price now.'

23 M. Mary Hey was her Assistant; M. Margaret Stokes, Head of Infants and M. Mary Hannon Assistant.

24 First FCJ Head. The Holt Hills Annals for 1945 record that a Third Form girl remarked one day 'My Grandmother was at school at Lingdale with the Faithful Companions of Jesus, but she only remembers the name of Mother Scholastica whom she loved very much.'

was at the Convent at Lingdale in 1854 being then a novice... Again a girl whose name I think was Ellen McNulty, was sent to me for instruction under the following circumstances. I was about to leave school when the girl in question spoke to me and told me she had been sent by an old lady very much stooped, dressed exactly like myself with the exception of the white cap, whom she had met at the door of the church. I instructed her and prepared her for Confession and Communion. This happened in April 1854. About 4 months later our Foundress visited the school, this girl being present, when suddenly she came to me and said: "Sister, that is the Lady that sent me to you." At the date first mentioned our Foundress was in France, and I was frightened at what seemed to me so strange an occurrence. Afterwards when this was being related by one of our Mothers to the Foundress as something very strange, she said: 'Oh no. God has various means of drawing souls to Himself.' I must add that the girl at the time when this happened was leading a bad life and had not been to Mass for nine years.

Chester 1854

The foundation at Dee House, Chester, was another response to another invitation.

Local Catholics had bought the property which stood on the site of an ancient Monastery and, as was to transpire later, on the site of a Roman amphitheatre²⁵. They had hoped to build a church to meet the needs of the increasing numbers of Catholics. The idea came to nothing and a new proposal was made. Sisters were to be invited to come and settle in the City and this was a project which Bishop Brown encouraged. Inviting the Faithful Companions of Jesus to extend their work in his diocese, he asked for a foundation in Chester, which would open a boarding school and teach girls and infants in the parish school. On January 29th 1854 four Sisters left Holt Hill for Chester.

25 The Roman remains came to light when foundations were being dug in 1929 for a building planned by the Ursuline Sisters.

Chester, like Liverpool and Birkenhead, had received large numbers of immigrants driven from Ireland by the famines. And as for 'young ladies' there seems to have been nothing for them in Chester since 1828. Bishop Brown and Canon Carberry, the Parish Priest, looked to the FCJs to help educate both classes.

Another new beginning

As had been the case at Lingdale, the first Superior was French, Reverend Mother Marie de Bussy, who afterwards became the third General Superior. She was succeeded in 1855 by Mother Josephine Stritch, an Italian, who in her turn was succeeded 23 years later by Mother Aloysia Russell, superior from 1878 to 1887. It is to her that we are indebted for the submission to the Slaughter Manuscript (1892) in the Shrewsbury Diocesan Archives.

Chester had nothing to equal the Stockport and Birkenhead²⁶ Riots but Mother Aloysia's account contains interesting details of the atmosphere into which the Sisters came.

'Between the Convent ground and the Dee stands the Protestant Bishop's palace... the old part of the building was, when the nuns came to Chester, occupied by Chancellor Raikes who died soon after their arrival. It was said that he died of a broken heart on account of their coming so near him. Chester, being essentially a Protestant City, its inhabitants naturally looked with horror on the fact of Catholic nuns coming amongst them and for a while were not very friendly. However when they found that they had neither horns nor cloven feet as some foolishly fancied, they came quietly round.'

And again:

'On their arrival the nuns found the house in a most dilapidated condition. The last inmates had been a Protestant minister and his family. Having fallen into disgrace with his Bishop, Doctor Graham, for having given hospitality to Gavazzi²⁷ when he came to Chester to make some astounding revelations about priests and

26 1852 and 1862 respectively.

27 While we had the Birkenhead and Stockport anti-Catholic riots (with a church burnt to the ground in Stockport) life was more peaceful in Chester though M.Aloysia says 'The inhabitants of Chester were for a while not very friendly to the nuns'.

nuns, he was inhibited and had to decamp. When the nuns came to Dee House they found Gavazzi's name written on the door of the room which he had occupied, and I think it was in that room that the first Mass was celebrated on the 1st of March 1854.'

The dilapidated condition is witnessed to by 'An Account of money expended on Dee House' 'examined and found correct by Edward Canon Carberry, July 31st 1855.'²⁸ William Washington, Plumber, had submitted four bills ranging from 9/- to £4/5/7, totalling £6/18/4; there were four more from Mr Crosby and Mr Tasker, Plasterer, amounting to £12/3/7; the painter, Edward Pritchard was paid £9/10/- and John Harrison, Joiner, £6/2/-. The purchase price of the House was £1,400; the cost of a stove £1/7/- and the cost of coals to air the house, £2/12/3. Gas was already available but £3/12/8 was paid for gas fittings.

Madame d'Houët had bought the house from the Bishop. An interesting fragment in the Diocesan Archives bears witness to the fact that financial arrangements are always scrutinised.

Legal opinion on operation of Act

As this Convent was purchased on the 18th July 1856, with funds voluntarily contributed, it appears to be exempt from duty under the Act.

Arrangements were soon under way to open a parish school. A coach house and hayloft in the grounds were pressed into service. The girls and infants were in the hayloft; the boys in the coach house under the care of a Master. In 1858 the boys moved to a newly built school in Queen Street and the girls were temporarily housed in two small rooms in Water Gate Row whilst a new building was erected for them at Dee House.

On November 5th 1858 the foundation stone of a new building was laid; the top room was for the girls, the lower room for the infants with a gallery running from end to end. To defray the cost of building the Poor School the Sisters held a series of bazaars. It was all very

well for Pugin to fulminate against the Catholic practice of holding bazaars and lotteries to raise funds²⁹ but there really was little alternative.

The first bazaar raised £200; the second £178 and what is recorded as 'The Liverpool Bazaar' £175/6/6. There were also donations from well-wishers.

Both the Diocesan and FCJ Archives have incomplete copies of the financial agreement entered into.

AGREEMENT A.MD.G

The Community of the Faithful Companions of Jesus at Dee House Chester intending to erect a school for poor girls and infants upon a portion of their land, it is hereby agreed at the time of the said erection between the Bishop of Shrewsbury and the General Superior of the above mentioned community Madame Josephine Louise Petit, that, if at any future time the said building should be required for the use or purpose of the community, or if the premises including the said building should be sold, the following sum should be paid by the community to the Bishop for the time being as a compensation for certain moneys derived from charitable sources which have been expended in the building.

1. £100 paid by the Bishop himself
2. granted by the Poor School Committee (No amount entered)
3. One third of the amount realised by a Bazaar held for the purpose amounting to (also left blank)
4. Any private donation given expressly for the purpose

The above arrangement is made in accordance with the decree of the II Pro. Council of Westminster³⁰.

+ J. Brown

October 13 /60

29 'Pugin's abhorrence of bazaars and such means of raising funds had grown fiercely during his early years of contact with the English Catholics.' Denis Gwynn: The Earl of Shrewsbury, Pugin and the Catholic Revival. P 31.

30 This statement in its entirety is only in FCJ A2506/1.

It seems likely that M. Clotilde had signed this agreement but by 1870 the papers had been mislaid and oral tradition was being called upon. Eugene Buquet, Parish Priest wrote³¹ to the Bishop hoping His Lordship might discover the paper and advise him '*what claim to make on behalf of the mission and when to make it*' now that the girls and infants were moving to new buildings in Queen Street and the building at Dee House reverting '*to conventional use*'.

Shortly after the Girls and Infants had moved to Queen Street, Mother Aloysia tells how '*the ground (where the coach-house and hayloft had been) without any apparent cause gave way; falling from a height of several feet to the level of the lane below; had the children been there we may imagine what the consequences would have been.*'

As it was, the consequences might still have been grave. It was apparently in the middle of October 1871 when, during a night of heavy rains, many of the Sisters who were sleeping in the old building were woken by a cracking sound at 3 a.m. and in the morning saw the building, in which they had spent the night, half suspended³².

Unlike the foundations at Lingdale and Birkenhead, that at Chester never had a second, or third, home. But, like the others, extensions were put up and on February 2nd 1867, Fr Mulvaney, acting Parish Priest, laid the foundation stone for *a new wing comprising chapel, study-room and dormitory for the boarders...The new chapel was solemnly opened on 23rd October 1867 by Bishop Brown, in the presence of a large number of priests, and dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.*

That Dee House garden was a place of great beauty is witnessed to by Faithful Companions of Jesus and by Ursuline Sisters who took over the house and schools in August 1925. For some time there had been debate over the number of non-Catholic pupils but the matter was precipitated by the opening of a new Boarding School at Poles, Ware and Sisters were withdrawn for that foundation.

(We) '*admired the very pleasant-garden in the front of the house with the beautifully kept lawn and variegated flower beds of dahlias, sunflowers, clarkia, gyp and sweet-peas... the rest of the garden extended down the*

31 Shrewsbury diocesan Archives 15/12/1870.

32 Chester Annals 1871.

side and behind the house where a statue of Our Lady dominated a high mound. To the left of this was a well kept croquet lawn, and beds of red carnation grew in profusion along the outer wall. Mr Walsh was clearly no ordinary gardener.

Although we were enchanted by the mellow ruin attached to the Church of St John next door, the nocturnal life of the owl, whose hooting mingled with the strange singing of the weir, kept sleep far from us that night. However, these sounds soon formed the background of our lives and within a very short time we hardly noticed them.³³

The Devotional Life of the Schools

The school year initially was marked almost exclusively by church feasts; in time Prize Day became the great secular feast and Inspectors' visits and Examinations began to play their part in marking the seasons of the year.

Unity, transcendence, protection

The aim of the devotional life of the Schools was clearly to draw the children into the liturgical round of the church's year and so deepen their awareness and their faith. Speaking of patronal feasts the late Archbishop Romero said that '*the essential thing that our liturgical and popular feasts ought to offer... is a threefold sense—of unity, of transcendence and of protection*'³⁴, three blessings which the Sisters would have hoped to obtain for those whose lives they touched. Everywhere for them it was a day of intercession. The mistresses in St Werburgh's, Chester, for example, in 1892, gathered the little ones round our Lady's statue and '*rendered loving homage while we entreated her ever to guard the souls of our young charges.*'

In 1887, the Upton chaplain, Fr Dallow, thought that everything had been done on December 8th to raise the children's hearts to heaven and he prayed that '*the memory of the feast would be a sweet balm in the midst of the trials of life.*' The number of pupils who, having left school, returned year after year to celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception must be some indication of the profound impression the feast had made upon them.

This sense of the 'trials of life' and the protection which Mary would offer them is well illustrated in the stories of three young women and their desire to receive their Child of Mary Medal. In 1867, Marie Josephine, niece of the King of Dahomey³⁵ was baptised into the Church at Chester. Unexpectedly summoned home she begged to be allowed to receive her medal without having gone through the usual Advancements. Another '*on the point of saying good-bye to this refuge of peace where the first rays of faith had shone into her soul,*

34 Romero: The violence of Love (Compiled James R. Broderick S.J. 1988) Page 70.
35 Now more commonly called Benin, W.Africa.

received the Child of Mary Medal as armour against the struggles which await her in the world³⁶. In 1897 a past pupil who lived in Egypt asked if she might receive her Medal before her marriage.

December 8th

Bishop Brown and Bishop Allen at various times spent the 8th of December with the Community, celebrating Mass, preaching, giving Habits, receiving Vows, entering into and adding to the joys of the day. General Communion usually marked the feast and on occasion there were First Communions too.

1874 ‘was Bishop Brown’s first visit since his illness and he came to Upton on the eve. On the feast itself there was General Communion at the Bishop’s Mass and then at 11 a.m. Pontifical Mass. For this occasion the sacristy was set up opposite the sanctuary so the procession which made solemn entry to the pealing organ covered some 120 ft. The Bishop preached on the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ and this part of the proceedings ended with the solemn consecration of the congregation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus everyone repeating the words of the Act after Bishop Brown. He then returned to his throne. Mass followed and ended with the blessing and Pontifical indulgence. In the evening there was Solemn Benediction given by Bishop and all the ecclesiastics with him.’

The altars were outstandingly beautiful whether in Chapel, Congregation Chapel, Classroom or Refectory. In 1886 the Congregation Chapel was the centre of Upton’s devotions since it had been enriched with a handsome altar, the gift of friends. Two years later the main chapel was said to be at its best ‘in all its panoply of brass and marble’. Year after year, we read of natural flowers and ferns, chrysanthemums of dazzling whiteness and great beauty, and numerous sparkling lights.

In ensuing decades new ways were found of highlighting the feast. In 1873, after the procession the Act of Faith and Benediction, there were evening illuminations at Upton, ‘when fireworks etc. lit up the lawn in the centre of which was placed a statue of Our Lady and at her feet a transparency with the word MARIA. During fireworks several cantatas were sung

so that the praises of Mary were heard on all sides.' In 1887 'the Study Hall was decorated with lace hangings, held by silver leaves and tea roses. There was an abundance of abutilons, geraniums and ferns. The numerous lamps were covered with dark red shades which helped shed a gentle, mysterious light.' At Holt Hill, in 1897, there was a large illuminated grotto in the Study Hall, and the word MARIA was formed by Chinese lanterns across the room. On that occasion, *Our Lady's Angel appeared to tell the pupils that their Virgin Mother had hidden treasures in the garden and an excited hunt followed Items such as rosary beads and small statues of Our Lady were found.*

Torch-light processions through the house, with decades of the Rosary recited en route, and concluding with the profession of faith, sermon and Solemn Benediction were all part of what the Chester Annalist called the 'sweet joys and traditional customs'³⁷ of the feast. In the evening of the feast at St Werburgh's, Chester, 'all the children formed a long procession, with a light in the hand whilst the statue was carried by four little boys.'³⁸

The hymns, too, were part of tradition—*Tota Pulchra; Thou art All Fair; Sinless and Beautiful; Oui je le crois.*

In the evening the children entertained the Community with their Seance or Soiree—recitations, music, tableaux-vivants, all relating to the Feast. In 1888, for example, at Upton the tableaux represented the 'types under which the Blessed Virgin is announced in Sacred Scripture'. Among the items at the evening entertainment in 1892 was the 'Apparition of the Angel to Elijah in the Desert', during which Handel's 'Rest in the Lord' was sung by a child with a very good contralto voice.³⁹ At Holt Hill in 1897 the Juniors produced a 'Living Lourdes', complete with gendarme; peasants and M. le Cure.

At Upton in 1900 past and present pupils combined to give the entertainment. 'A scene from Racine's *Esther* was sweetly acted and music and songs of a sacred character diversified the program'.

37 Chester 1898.

38 Chester 1887

39 The influence of Fr Dallow may be found here whose 'analyses of Handel's "Messiah" and Mendelssohn's "Elijah" are works of high standing and are greatly treasured by those fortunate to possess them.' (Obituary: The Ratcliffian 1918)

One might wonder what spare time there was during the day but in 1887 it is noted that apart from the pious exercises the children ‘plied their needles for the poor’ and listened to readings from the stories of those FCJs who had recently sailed to Australia and Canada, some of whom would be known to them.

Other Marian Feasts

Nor was December 8th the only Marian feast of the year. The Presentation, Visitation and Assumption were all marked, as were the feasts of Our Lady of Graces, Our Lady of Lourdes, Mary Help of Christians, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mary, Seat of Wisdom, (very popular at examination time) and in schools and parishes alike, Queen of the Holy Rosary.

May, above all, was Mary’s Month.

May 1863 was the last celebrated at Lingdale and there were feelings of sadness as well as gratitude. ‘Lingdale was going to fall back into protestant hands. May would come again but would not inspire hearts frozen by heresy with a single sentiment of love for our mother.’⁴⁰ In the spirit of the times, the Sisters were, it would seem, practitioners as well as victims of religious prejudice!

In Chester, May devotions took a very practical form. The children practised little acts of self-denial which bore witness to the sincerity of their love for their heavenly Mother. They offered them to Our Lady in the evening, writing down in return for their goodness, as it were, special intentions which they then placed in front of the statue.⁴¹

Benediction was celebrated each evening and Processions abounded in both May and June when offerings of floral tributes to the shrines of Jesus and Mary were seen as ‘the external exponents of the acts of self-sacrifice of the little flock under our charge’.⁴²

The practice of Crowning the statue of Our Lady is first mentioned at St Laurence’s, Birkenhead as counter-attraction to the Protestant May Queen.

40 Upton 1863.

41 Chester 1894 et al.

42 Upton 1903.

The Assumption, which after the election of Mother Marie de Bussy⁴³ in 1889 as General Superior, became more specially a Society feast, had been the first feast celebrated at Upton in 1863. '*In the morning, the statue of the Blessed Virgin was carried in procession across the green and shady paths, in the evening the house was illuminated... A transparent representation of Mary Immaculate hung nicely from the main centre window. We had placed pianos in the groves... The Oratorio of the Assumption was sung... the whole astonishing our protestant neighbours drawn to the walls by the music.*'

The Rosary

Throughout the year there was great devotion to saying the Rosary. In the early years of Lingdale and Birkenhead, it was the chief means used for obtaining graces for those who had abandoned the practice of their religion. By 1858, it was established that the Night School in Birkenhead ended with Rosary for the conversion of sinners.⁴⁴ Years later the pupil at Upton, whose marks including all the subjects, were the highest, was awarded a handsome set of Rosary beads in Connemara marble and silver.⁴⁵

Rosary Sunday clearly ranked with the great Marian feasts. The Holt Hill Annalist records that '*we did our best to stimulate the fervour of our children and to increase in our hearts love of the Queen of Heaven.*'⁴⁶ At Upton there were pilgrimages to all the principal statues of the Blessed Virgin in the house, carrying '*a rosary of roses, and cushions on which rested emblems of the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries.*'⁴⁷

For the Community also, rosary together was a tradition. During the Christmas holidays, they 'met daily in Chapel for the recital of the three rounds... For years we have thus prayed that God would send us an increase of pupils.'⁴⁸

43 M. Marie de Bussy had received an education quite rare for a woman. She was well versed in Latin, Greek and several modern languages.

44 The names of those who were being prayed for were written out and entrusted to our Lady. When the names of those converted were removed it caused great sadness as though Our Lady's protection would be less; to console them, a crown of gold leaves was made for the statue and on the backs of the leaves were written the names of those who had received the sacraments and were back on the right path. (Holt Hill 1862)

45 Upton 1899.

46 Holt Hill 1887.

47 Upton 1887.

48 Upton 1897.

Statues, grottoes...

Devotion and fervour were helped on by statues, pavilions and shrines and their acquisition and erection are duly noted: a statue of Notre Dame de Lourdes in the vestibule at Upton (1873); a little pavilion for a statue of our Lady at the far end of Rosary Walk (1887) and Rosary Sunday marked in 1889 by the unveiling of a beautiful new statue of the Immaculate Conception from Munich, gift of friends and pupils.

Feasts of the Lord

Christmas was celebrated in Upton in 1864, the first Christmas Mass since the Reformation. There were First Communion, a crib, carols in English sung by the smallest girls from the School, with pupils from the Boarding School ‘creeping into a room next to that which serves as a Chapel (to sing) “Adeste Fideles” at the Offertory.’

The graphic telling of the Passion Story made its own impression. A child dying at Holt Hill in 1898 could say *‘I think our Lord is letting me suffer a little bit like himself – the pain in my head reminds me of his crown of thorns, my feet and hands are burning with pain which makes me think of the nails which pierced His. The dreadful pain in my side reminds me that His Sacred side was pierced for me.’*

In 1886 Fr Dallow introduced a new note into the Ascension Day celebrations when he invited a band from one of the Catholic institutes in Liverpool to come and play in front of the classroom where community and children were assembled.

Corpus Christi

Corpus Christi was part of the procession season—with outdoor altars erected in the various gardens⁴⁹. The feast was also followed in all the Houses by an Octave of Expositions on the ensuing Sundays. Similarly the feast of the Sacred Heart would be marked by Exposition and frequently by processions. At Upton in 1886 an altar was erected in the garden ‘adorned with foliage and flowers and here we terminated our devotions at 8 o’clock in the

⁴⁹ At Upton, the traditional sites seem to have been in front of the chaplain’s house and opposite the Hall door.

evening.' When the weather was inclement the procession wound its way through the house to the altar erected in the Study.

Processions

In Chester, it was believed that '*Solemn Processions which take place four times in the year are a source of much edification and permanent good, for more than one soul has this year⁵⁰ been led into the church through the grace received when assisting thereat. About 70 of our children between the ages of 3 and 10 years walk in them, and, as they wend their way around the Church, many a silent tear rolls down the cheeks.*'

Quarante Ore

As for the Parishes so for the Convents, Quarante Ore was a high point. The Bishop would come to open the days of Exposition by celebrating Solemn High Mass, often remaining or returning with a number of clergy for the Mass of Deposition (1873), Community and children alike spent all their free time in adoration, indeed at Chester in 1874 many of the pupils, 'rose an hour earlier in order to pass it in adoration.' That year Chester's Quarante Ore fell in March; nonetheless '*these hours of grace (were) terminated by solemn procession of the Blessed Sacrament in our grounds*'.⁵¹

The Sacred Heart

In 1894 a member of the Holt Hill community was spared an attack of erysipelas. In thanksgiving we determined to celebrate the feast of the Sacred Heart with unusual pomp. We had Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, the sanctuary was resplendent with lights and all the ornaments were crimson & gold; three hearts, one within the other, and comprised of flowers and lights, were arranged on the steps of the predella and the children kept up adoration all day, with the Community.

50 1894.

51 The names by which this initially Italian devotion was known is interesting. In consecutive years Chester refers to it as Quarante Heures; Quarante Ore; Forty Hours. (1872-74)

Five years later, 1899, forty-nine past pupils came to spend the day at Holt Hill. They presented an offering of £100, the combined gift of past and present pupils and a few friends. It was to cover the cost of a large rockery, a pedestal and canopy in Bath Portland, and red Wilderness stone, together with a Portland stone statue of the Sacred Heart, which occupy an elevated position at the end of garden. On the pedestal was inscribed the text: 'Learn of me for I am gentle and humble of Heart' and the names of the donors placed under the statue. The building of this grotto had been a long cherished wish. At Upton there had been a Sacred Heart Grotto 'situated at the far end of the garden' certainly since 1888.

Just as in Chester May practices became linked with self-discipline, so too, the devotion to the Sacred Heart was looked to to produce fruit. At Holt Hill in 1874 the younger ones rivalled their elders in zeal and 'formed a small association which they called Colombes du Sacré Coeur; they submitted the rule drawn up by themselves to their mistress; it really is very good for children so young' and at Upton, throughout June 1896 the pupils 'kept up daily Communion of Reparation and the Apostleship of Study.'

In Chester, during a parish mission in 1889 the Apostolate of Prayer and the Association of the Sacred Heart were established. The Zealatrices, who for the most part were Children of Mary, gave great proof of their zeal. One who earned her living, and her father's, by sewing, visited a woman who had *neither bread nor fire*. The visitor had scarcely anything but gave what she had. The following day she returned with 1/-, the gift of another zealous who never earns more than 6/- a week. It was the recipient who told the nuns.

What Rosaries were to Marian devotion, Badges seem to have been in relationship to the Sacred Heart especially round the turn of the century. One Protestant day-pupil at Holt Hill wore one and when she was dying held it tightly in her hand.⁵² In St Laurence's School they 'framed numbers of Badges in Kindergarten frames and they were disposed of almost as soon as they were ready.'⁵³ In 1898 when the school had a narrow escape from fire, it was 'thanks to the Sacred Heart who watches over the school in an especial manner' and the following year an Excellent School Report 'came to gladden our hearts and augment our

52 1899.
53 1897.

gratitude to the dear Sacred Heart who does so much for this school.’ In the same year they were spared from an epidemic of measles which affected the whole town. Many schools closed but attendance at St Laurence’s Girls School never went below 80%. This deliverance was attributed to the fact that ‘*a Badge is always left over the entrance door, to show our loving confidence in the Friend who never fails us even in our greatest need.*’ St Werburgh’s, Chester, towards end of March 1889 had an outbreak of scarlatina. Twelve children were sick and there was great fear of the sickness spreading since the Government exams were due in April, ‘*Scapulars⁵⁴ of the Sacred Heart of Jesus with the words: ‘Stop, the Heart of Jesus is here’ were immediately procured and given to each of the children of the school. From that moment no new case showed itself.*

Saints

There were on occasion half-holidays. Upton in 1900 celebrated the Feast of St Cecilia ‘*to reward zeal in congregational singing*’ and earlier that same year when the Inspector arrived at St Werburgh’s, Birkenhead, to examine the singing he found them enjoying, a half holiday in honour of St Patrick. St Philomena, a Society devotion from the time of the foundress, was responsible at Chester for keeping up the numbers and when in 1889 the number of pupils reached 40 ‘*we gave St Philomena a lamp as had been promised*’. St Roch was everywhere in charge of good health⁵⁵; St Anthony had his devotees. Upton Community received several favours in 1895 including the collection of an old debt, and a child dying at Holt Hill in 1898 was awarded as prize ‘*an oleograph of St Anthony to whom she had great devotion*’ and to whom she had often sent part of her pocket money for St Anthony’s Bread.

54 1874 ‘Jesuits conducted the Parish Mission in Chester. One priest was entirely occupied with the children, a great number of whom made First Communion and received the Scapular.’ (Chester 1874) 1898 at Holt Hill. Sister Catherine Kearney was dying and ‘spent the time from 12 to 1 a.m. saying the Rosary, the prayers necessary to gain indulgences attached to the blue scapular etc.’

55 In 1890 and 1896 he is mentioned as having preserved the Chester schools. On the latter occasion when half the children at St Werburgh’s were victims of the measles epidemic which raged in the city many of the schools were closed some for 12-13 weeks but trusting in the intercession of St Roch and the succour of the Sacred Heart they kept the school open and worked on in spite of their fears, because the Government Examinations were approaching.

The three hundredth anniversary of the death of St Aloysius was marked everywhere: General Communion, 'grand holiday', procession and devotions culminating in Act of Consecration to St Aloysius. It was 'a white dress day', at Holt Hill an outdoor procession, at Upton a shrine erected in the Study.

Chester seems unique amongst the three houses in its devotion to St Winefride; every year there was '*the usual pilgrimage*' to Holywell and 'joyous' and 'joyful' the words most frequently used. In 1894 fifty-five travelled by train and having performed their devotions, venerated the relic, sang hymns and bathed, they went on to Pantasaph by waggonettes.

Father Wilfrid Dallow, later Canon, Chaplain at Upton 1885-1917, was very zealous in the Cause of the English Martyrs. He had obtained a large relic of Blessed Cuthbert Mayne and on the feast day in 1891 '*we bore it in procession through the house, then venerated it*' before sermon and benediction.

St Joseph

Universally acclaimed was St Joseph. March was his month, marked always by 'traditional devotions', Wednesday his day⁵⁶, and he was seen as the provider of the foundations. At Lingdale when there was still hope of acquiring the property, the matter was put into his hands⁵⁷ and, in the first year at Upton, the Annual Letter declares '*the protection of St Joseph for this house is so great and so visible that it seems to us it should be named as a characteristic.*'⁵⁸ To him was entrusted the task of filling the boarding school with '*good and numerous pupils*'⁵⁹ and to encourage him, since at the end of February, after an outbreak of scarlet fever, there were only 38 pupils, the General Superior, M. Josephine Petit wrote '*Here is the month of March; trust in St Joseph, recommend to him all your spiritual and*

56 In 1891 the Community at Dee House begged St Joseph to interest himself on their behalf when they wanted permission and money for new buildings. It did not escape their notice that it was on a Wednesday they heard the pleasing sound of workmen's tools greeted our ears.

57 1856.

58 1864.

59 1867.

*temporal needs and when the house is filled with 80 good children we will think of building the chapel in his honour.*⁶⁰

When Sisters were leaving Holt Hill to make the new foundation in Paisley in 1889 and arrived in Liverpool with excess baggage (20 tonnes) they had not the means to pay the excess charge. There and then they prayed to St Joseph before telling the official that the luggage '*held no precious things but the thousand and one things which a new foundation requires.*' To their amazement there was no further difficulty. The official decreed that all the luggage was to be taken at no extra cost.

Deliverance of another sort was experienced in March 1898 at St Laurence's Elementary School. Candles had been burning all morning in honour of St Joseph and they were left by mistake during the dinner hour. On their return for afternoon school altar frill, curtains, flowers and cloth were reduced to ashes; the statue was blistered, the desk serving as an altar charred, yet the fire itself had died out without doing further injury, '*There stood the statues of the Sacred Heart and St Joseph in the midst of the ruins & the lamp was burning brightly as though nothing had happened.*'

On March 19th 1900 Inspectors arrived in St Werburgh's, Chester. They proved most friendly and praised highly the School, the teachers and their Method. '*So many kind and laudatory remarks had been made during the visit that, at the close of this day so dear to us, we felt our confidence in the protection of dear St Joseph considerably strengthened and our efforts to spread devotion to him more earnest.*'

Guilds and Sodalities

In Parishes and Convents alike there was a great number of Associations, Guilds, Sodalities and Congregations. The Bishop had asked the Sisters to affiliate themselves to the Guild of Our Lady of Ransom 'whose special object is the conversion of England. It is under the patronage of Our Lady of Ransom, St Gregory the Great and the Holy English Martyrs'.⁶¹ There was, too, the League of the Apostolate of Prayer,⁶² the Work Association

60 1868.

61 Upton 1891.

62 At Chester Community and children were enrolled 'in different degrees. Since then we make the Communion of Reparation and we have the monthly reunion each First Friday.'

for Poor Missions, Sodalities of the Infant Jesus, of the Holy Angels, St Agnes, St Aloysius⁶³ and of course the Children of Mary and the Christian Mothers.

November: Holy Souls

Devotion to the Holy Souls, manifested in prayer and sacrifice, brought the Liturgical year to its close. Everywhere great efforts were made. In St Werburgh's, Chester, '*the children contributed according to their power to the relief of the souls in Purgatory by Masses, Ways of the Cross and a great number of little sacrifices.*'⁶⁴ Every ha'penny was treasured up. 'Even the babies' class wished to give their share and, on the mistress going into their room, a mite of three years ran to her with a small key and pointing to a money box on the table said: 'The key for the Holy Souls', and the little ones with expectation depicted on each face, breathlessly awaited the opening of the box which contained an offering for a Mass all in half-pennies.'⁶⁵ In the elementary school at Upton, the pennies were for Masses for those detained in 'God's prison'⁶⁶. In the Convent schools there was a bazaar each November from the proceeds of which came offerings for Masses in that month, regularly during the year and on the occasion of death or special anniversary.

63 'In Liverpool where the small boys are very numerous, I have authorised our Sisters to establish for them a congregation of St Louis Gonzague' (R.M. Josephine Petit 1867)

64 1887.

65 Chester 1900.

66 1898.

Sacraments and Sacramentals Of Death and Dying Chapel Building

The celebration of the Sacraments has taken on different emphases at different times in the church's history. It seems strange now, perhaps, that when the niece of the King of Dahomey was to be received into the church at Chester in 1867 Bishop Brown wanted to baptise her himself and so 'that the ceremony could be as public and solemn as possible he held it in the Parish church.' The following year the Bishop again took his part when a four-year-old was dying at Holt Hill. She wanted to receive Holy Communion and when the Chaplain consulted the Bishop not only did he give his consent but announced that he would come himself '*to give confirmation to our little angel so that she might shine in heaven with a greater degree of glory.*' At times there seems a strange sense of precedence as when in 1891 after giving the habit to seven postulations at Holt Hill Bishop Knight '*administered Confirmation to 25 children when (the postulants) retired to change their dress*' as though it were an interlude in the other Ceremony! And yet the following year he writes to M. Frances Gibson saying '*Precedence in Sacraments would include Confirmation. But the Church has her order in this and 'where the Bishop confirms in Cathedral or private chapel he calls up of those assembled the boys first.'*'

Ordinations took place more than once in the Convent Chapel at Dee House and Holt Hill—sometimes to the sub-diaconate, sometimes to the priesthood, on one occasion as many as twelve German Jesuits from Ditton (1886). Bishop Knight went to see the children and explained the forthcoming ceremonies to them.

Holt Hill was also the setting for the consecration of 26 altar stones. Bishop Knight had himself supervised the preparations for the event and profited of the occasion to speak about the history of the Catacombs and the early Christian martyrs.

Statues and grottoes

Again at Holt Hill, in 1899, the whole household went in procession, after breakfast, to the blessing of two new statues—one of the Sacred Heart and one of St Joseph. Despite the fact that he had preached at some length at a First Communion Mass before breakfast, a sermon in the course of which he expounded the significance of the word ‘Communion;’ and stressed to the two young Communicants that ‘as there is a First Communion day so it is well to remember that there will also be a Last’, Bishop Allen spoke again at each statue. First, from the raised platform of the Sacred Heart he delivered

‘(j)ust a few words as to the meaning of the church of God in the ceremony I have just performed The raising up of a statue in a place like this, or in any Catholic home, is a public profession of our faith and it also shows that we carry on our devotions with the mind of the church, as her true children beyond what is of strict obligation. In the world, there are some who confine their devotions to a very limited region indeed. We set up a statue like this then to show that we carry our devotions on in the spirit of the Church and we have it blessed, to show that we wish as good children of the church to do everything in union with the Church of God.

What is the meaning then of blessing a statue? We know that there is no virtue whatever in the block of stone out of which it is chiselled—and the blessing rests rather on the beholders, than on the statue itself; for, as of old, when the Brazen Serpent was set up in the midst of the children of God, all those who looked upon it with faith and confidence, were cured of their ills; so Holy Church in the words of the prayer I have just used, prays ‘that those who shall look upon this statue may receive an increase of faith and confidence and Love.’ And as it is, as I said lately, in the ordinary vocation of a good Christian, to be in constant communion with God, as the holy Apostle St Paul exhorts: “Whether you eat, or whether you drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all in the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” —

therefore it was a wise and a holy thought on the part of those who have charge of you, to raise up this statue of the Sacred Heart on this place of recreation. For times of amusement and of pleasure are not always times of holiness; and it is at those times when we have nothing particular to do, as we put it to ourselves, that our enemies often get the better of us. Therefore I say, that it was a thought of wisdom and holiness, that raised this statue in your midst in this place, so that even in the most reckless or thoughtless games or amusement, one glance at Him will help to keep you straight, not with moroseness or gloominess, for there is nothing morose or gloomy about the practice of the faith of a Christian. It matters not if the features are like His or not; they call to our mind His Face and His Heart, and that is all we want. And His Heart has been here represented as full of all the beauty and power of Love—and if you continue all your actions thus in union with His Sacred Heart here on earth, assuredly you will one day be united for all eternity, with His Sacred Heart in Heaven.'

At St Joseph's grotto, the Bishop took as his text the words 'Go to Joseph'— contrasting 'the Egyptians of old, who in time of distress, were told to go to the son of Jacob for their corn, and all the other things needful for their bodies', with his hearers who were urged to go to St Joseph for all their spiritual wants.

Take then this legend for your motto: "Go to Joseph" in your joys, your sorrows, trials, difficulties, temptations even, and you will assuredly find help and comfort and consolation. He will help you and lead you to the Sacred Heart, whose statue has been set up in your midst, and which I just now blessed, that you may dwell there in time and eternity.'

This is one of the first occasions where commemorative photographs are mentioned! All 'assembled in the garden to have their photographs taken in two different groups, the first representing His Lordship, Rev. E. Rooney⁶⁷, our chaplain's assistant, and the Children of Mary. In the second, the first communicants

occupied the place of honour, each side of His Lordship, while the rest of the children were prettily arranged among the flowers and stones of the rockery and in both photographs, the Sacred Heart forms the background'

First Communions

First Communion in both Convent and Parish were days of great solemnity and rejoicing. Substantial breakfasts, afternoons of play in the Convent garden, tea and Benediction would seem to have been the regular pattern. St Laurence's in 1896 had 75 First Communicants. 'They looked really nice, each wearing her Guild Medal and a Badge of the Sacred Heart.' The object of the entertainment was to keep them 'for the greater part of the day in order to secure them from the evil influence of the streets'.

Examples of rubric

The rubrics observed in relation to Mass and Communion are revealed in narratives from time to time. Christmas Day 1857 for instance lived in Canon Clegg's memory almost forty years later when he told Fr Giles what had happened to him.⁶⁸ Fr Ross⁶⁹ who was saying Mass at Holt Hill broke his fast at his second Mass by the ablutions. He sent a messenger post haste to St Patrick's School, which was used as a chapel of ease, where Fr Clegg was saying his second Mass 'and giving Communion (first Communion) to a great lot of boys'. As he himself said had it not been for his 'address and the delay of First Communion' he would have already started his third Mass. As it was, just at the end of Mass the messenger arrived, walked up to the predella and said: 'Please don't say your next Mass here but at St Werburgh's as Father Ross has broken his fast'. So Father Clegg had to sing the 11 o'clock Mass and preach also at St Werburgh's, Christmas Day 1857.

68 According to 'To Preserve Their Memory' Canon George Benjamin Clegg was Professor at Lisbon 1856-58 and curate at St Werburgh's 1858-1860. This incident with the date 1857 comes from the Diocesan Archives. Fr Chichele Giles (1850-1922) was a convert who after ordination in 1887 was successively secretary to Bishops Knight, Carroll and Allen. He appears frequently in the Upton Annals.

69 Fr John Ross curate St Werburgh's 1857

A second happening which throws light on a variety of situations occurred in 1896, this time at St Laurence's where breaking the consecrated host was clearly not an option. It was a custom there for the children to make the nine First Fridays once they had made their First Communion. The custom 'worked wonders in the children and in their homes...'

(O)nce through some accident or other, a sufficient number of particles was not consecrated and some were deprived... One little girl crying sadly said 'Oh, Mother, this was my ninth First Friday and I didn't get Holy Communion. I was making them for my Father that he might leave off drinking and give my Mother the money he earns.' The Mistress tried to comfort her; but it was some time before she could get her to believe that her good intentions would be accepted since it was through no fault of her own that she had missed.'

In times when frequent Communion was not permitted, permission to receive was cherished. Marie Josephine, the African girl mentioned above, who had been baptised with her father's consent, had hoped that her first communion would be one of the first ceremonies in the Chapel being built at Chester. She was suddenly and unexpectedly summoned home. She therefore made her First Communion in the Sodality Chapel on Wednesday October 16th 'in England the date of the transferred feast of the Motherhood of the Blessed Virgin.' The Bishop allowed her to communicate the following Friday and Sunday too before she left.

At Holt Hill in June, the children 'in groups of three kept up the Communion of Reparation' and at St Laurence's the rector was highly edified 'at the number of children who received Holy Communion on the First Friday of June which had fallen during the Whitsuntide holidays'. Only about 20 out of over 200 had not remembered and 'they made up on Corpus Christi'.

'The Reaper Death'

When Mother Aloysius Kenny was dying at Holt Hill 'our devoted chaplain wishing her to enjoy all the consolations of religion brought the Holy Viaticum frequently; for seventeen successive days prior to her death she had the privilege of having Our Lord with her.' Bishop Allen visited her twice and forbade her to fast before Communion (1898)

Florence Lee Benda, a child dying at Holt Hill, received Extreme Unction in November 1895 and from that time, until her death in January 1896, received 'Viaticum almost weekly.' Another Holt Hill pupil, who like Florrie is buried with the Community at Flaybrick, was May Walsh. A Child of Mary, May had great devotion to Our Lady and on the morning of her death asked for her favourite hymn to be recited:

Mother! Mother I am coming
Home to Jesus and to Thee;
But my country's hills are distant
And their light I cannot see.
Mother hearken as I pray,
Meet me on my homeward way,
Meet me, Mother mine, today.

Of her Bishop Allen wrote: '*One more angel to minister at the White Throne. I cannot pray for this beautiful soul. I can but thank God for the glory of His handwork and the loving fruit of His divine grace and Fatherly care. Alleluia!*' May's body was laid out in the Sodality Chapel, surrounded with white lilies. Lilies were traditional. Four year old Amy had died in 1868 and on the morning of her funeral the altars, instead of being stripped and covered in black, were decorated with lilies. The Mass of the day was sung 'with joyful accord' and the pall which covered the coffin was scattered with lilies and everlasting flowers.

Descriptions of death, dying and the trappings of mourning reflect the tone of the Victorian age. The Reaper Death, the Great Reaper, the Divine Reaper frequently makes an appearance; souls frequently take flight to Heaven; the Heavenly Bridegroom finds lamps well trimmed; children fly sweetly towards the Lord; others embark on the last lonesome journey, some endure scarcely an agony, rather a passage from a calm sweet sleep to eternity.

When Mother Maria Mangan died, aged 24, in 1893 vast numbers ‘came to kneel by the lifeless body’; for the funeral the chapel at Holt Hill

‘was draped in black, looped with white lilies and twelve of the very poor belonging to the Guild of St Agnes, dressed in white with black sashes acted as pallbearers. The Children of Mary of the parish, all in black and wearing their blue ribbons took mourning coaches. At the cemetery the coffin was borne to the mortuary chapel, the boys with the school master lined one side of the path, girls and pupil teachers the other. Five hundred people were calculated to have lined the walks from the chief entrance to the grave. A heartrending sight.’

In Chester, 1912, Mother Elizabeth Austin’s sudden death occurred on the Feast of St Werburgh which was also her 67th birthday and a year to the day since she had left the parish school having taught there for 40 years and been Head for 36.

‘The Reaper Death had come to gather a flower to bloom in the garden of Paradise’ and it struck a great blow to the hearts of all. ‘Many tears were shed as the body was carried out; the St Vincent de Paul Society fell into line at the cemetery gates and accompanied the body to the grave, gracefully lined with moss and costly white flowers ordered and at cost of Mr Barker, a Protestant gentleman resident in Chester.’

Mother Elizabeth is commemorated in a stained glass window in St Werburgh’s church set against the background of Dee House and the old St Werburgh’s School.

‘When the final summons came’ on May 13th 1912, a little after midnight, for Mother Frances Gibson,

‘and as we saw her dear soul go forth in answer to it, we said “Lord, we give her back without a murmur but our hearts are truly wrung with sorrow”. On Tuesday evening the body of our dear Mother was borne in procession to the Chapel which was beautifully draped in black and silver for the solemn occasion. The coffin was placed on a catafalque before

the Sanctuary and solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated on Wednesday morning at 11 a.m. His Lordship the Bishop of Shrewsbury being the celebrant. There were also present a large gathering of clergy consisting mainly of chaplains and managers connected with the houses of her Province. The music of the Requiem—Gregorian Plain Chant—was most beautifully rendered by a choir of priests. The chief mourners were Mr Wilfrid Gibson and his two daughters, the brother and nieces of our dear Mother... The concourse of sympathetic friends was very large, and taxed to the utmost the capacity of both the Convent and the public chapel.'

The panegyric was delivered by the Bishop. After the absolutions,

'a procession formed to our little cemetery where already many of our dear Mothers and Sisters, devoted toilers in the vineyard of the Lord, are taking their long rest. On emerging from the gloom of the mortuary chapel into the bright sunshine of the garden beyond, the cortège was confronted by a crowd of sorrowing friends from the village, who, with the little children of the elementary school, had come to pay a last tribute of affection and gratitude to her revered remains. It was a strangely moving Sight, that long line of mourners, winding through the grassy meadow-land to the quiet little God's acre beyond, the rich purple of the Canons' mozzettas and the white surplices of the clergy, contrasting strongly with the thick black veils of the community and the white of the novices and boarders. As the procession passed slowly along one caught glimpses of the eighty little children of the elementary school walking two by two, the girls in white and wearing black sashes, and the boys with black arm-bands. This was perhaps the most touching sight of all for it told in eloquent silence of gratitude and love that is stronger than death. From time to time the impressive strophes of the "In Paradisum" floated through the air and increased the mournful aspect of the entire scene. The Cross-bearer had

*reached the cemetery before those at the end of the Procession had reached the garden. The Bell, Mary Zoe Frances, ... the last Feast-day gift of the pupils to our dear Mother, tolled her funeral knell. His Lordship, the Bishop, performed the last rites of the Church over her grave.*⁷⁰

Chapel building and adornment

The contemporary thirst for all things Gothic left its mark on the Sisters. Whilst they were still at Lingdale, Marie Madeleine wrote to say ‘it is absolutely necessary to give up the idea of a Gothic chapel’, but when the barn at Upton was transformed in 1871⁷¹ the Community rejoiced in its being in the Gothic style and were well content to wait for suitable furnishings.

Their chief benefactor, (in fact he was called ‘the greatest benefactor Upton has ever known’) was Mr Bilsborrow of the Fylde, Lancs. His only child, the dearly loved ‘Mother Bridget’ was at that time, a member of the community. Most of the chapel furnishings, the three altars⁷², the statues, the Stations of the Cross (with their French inscriptions) and the Communion Rails, were all his gifts. During Bishop Brown’s last visit to Upton⁷³, he arranged for the consecration of the cemetery⁷⁴ and Mr Bilsborrow defrayed the expenses of its construction. Later, through gratitude and respect for the memory of her father, the body of his daughter, who died as Superior of Holt Hill, was buried at Upton.⁷⁵

70 As we have seen, M. Frances was educated at Gumley and later at Lingdale where she joined the community in 1859, aged 21. After her novitiate in Paris she returned to Lingdale, was then a member of the first Upton Community before going to Holt Hill as Class Mistress in 1866. In time, she became Superior. In 1886 she was named Provincial of the Northern Province of England and moved back to Upton. In 1892 she visited the houses in Canada as representative of the General Superior and fulfilled the same mission to Australia in 1894. She was in large part responsible for the foundation of several new Convents; one of her achievements was the establishment of Sedgley Park Training College in Manchester.

71 The Architect was M. Victoire Dupont, sister of M. Clotilde whom she had succeeded as Superior. She designed the Chapel and the corridors leading to it.

72 Bishop Brown consecrated the High Altar in September 1875

73 He died, October 14th 1881, the last surviving member of the restored Hierarchy.

74 It was consecrated by Mgr. Hilton V.G. who afterwards became president of the Lisbon College.

75 Also buried at Upton was the foundress. She died in Paris 1858 but her body was brought to England for safety during the anti-clerical times in France. It remained at Upton until 1980 when on the advice of the Postulator for her Cause it was moved again, this time to the Generalate, Broadstairs, Kent.

Holt Hill Chapel

At Holt Hill the chapel was the accomplishment of Mother Victoire Duckett who was Superior of the house for 25 years. 'How she loved every stone of it! She had planned it all and devoted every thought and desire for years to its achievement.'⁷⁶

Preliminary excavations in 1907 were halted as the Corporation intimated that they intended to lay electric lines and would probably need part of the Lane. Although disappointed at the delay the community came to appreciate their gain, since the new chapel would have been very close to the road. Once it was built, as at Upton before them, the Community waited for its decoration and furnishings to be completed. The erection of 'beautiful Communion rails' meant that a new altar more in keeping with them became 'an absolute necessity.' Miss Beechy taught in the school and lived in the Convent. She had been seriously ill in 1910 and after an operation returned to Holt Hill where the Community looked after her until she was well again. In thanksgiving to God for her recovery and as a mark of gratitude to the Community for their kindness she gave a cheque for £100 to be used for decoration of the Sanctuary and it was decided that the money would be used for a new altar. Years passed as plans were studied. Then in the early months of 1914 a decision was taken. In July the Blessed Sacrament was moved to the Gym, the chapel walls were tinted a delicate blue with a darker dado, the organ was taken to pieces and thoroughly cleaned—but no altar arrived. Green marble pillars which were to relieve the monotony of the white stone altar were in Antwerp; the War was perhaps going to last 3 years.

What to do? The green marble was replaced temporarily by white which meant that at least they had an altar and it was consecrated on November 4th by Bishop Singleton. 'The Bishop sang Pontifical High Mass, a large number of the clergy from the neighbourhood assisted, and the Chapel was full of friends... Everybody admired the improvements that had been made. The stained glass windows look more beautiful than ever when showing from the pale blue walls, and the dazzling white altar seems to tell Our Lord, that here, at least, is the best that we can give. The old altar remains and the tabernacle is almost unchanged, but a high

arched reredos rises above the old one and stretches out on each side to two massive columns crowned by cupolas. In niches in these columns, statues of our Lady on one side, and of the Angel Gabriel on the other represent the Annunciation. The day ended with solemn Benediction, but the joy of our beautiful Chapel seems to grow on us more and more.'

The new altar with its large throne meant a large monstrance. This Mother Victoire did not live to see but before she died she knew that Past and Present Pupils had given 'a handsome sum for this purpose to be spent as soon as the war is over'.⁷⁷

Mayer of Munich

St Werburgh's Church, Birkenhead completed its set of Twelve Apostles from 'the well-known firm, Mayer of Munich' in 1872 and in time all the convent chapels were graced by windows from the same firm. Chester was the first when the Father of some of the pupils presented one depicting the Assumption of Our Lady (1873). At Holt Hill the Duckett family gave one depicting the Descent of the Holy Spirit.(1906).⁷⁸

Upton had first a statue of the Immaculate Conception unveiled on Rosary Sunday 1889 and then in 1892 windows for the Sodality Chapel presented by Past Pupils and friends in memory of the General Superior, Mother Josephine Petit who had died in 1888 and the deceased Children of Mary. Bishop Knight pronounced them perfect. Those windows have not survived but the ones in the big Chapel have. The two which speak most movingly to visitors today are the two presented by Mrs Nellie Bacon. The Annals for 1900 carry the story behind the gift.

On July 11th a touching little ceremony took place in our chapel—the unveiling of two beautiful stained glass windows, erected by one of our old pupils in memory of her departed husband and children. One represents the 'Agony in the Garden' and bears beneath on a large brass plate the

77 It would seem that this was the monstrance given to Bishop Brewer, then Auxiliary Bishop of Shrewsbury for the Missions when Holt Hill closed in 1982.

78 Mayer's of Munich, founded in 1847, to make stained glass and mosaics are still in existence. In 1892 the large window behind Bernini's altar in St Peter's, Rome was created by Mayer and it so pleased Leo XIII that he named Mayer and Co. a 'Pontifical Institute of Christian Art.'

following words: “Erected by Eleanor Mary Bacon in memory of her beloved husband, Arthur Henry Bacon, Captain Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who was killed in action at Colenso, December 15th 1899.” *Beneath the second window, a beautiful representation of Hofmann’s celebrated picture, “Our Lord blessing little children” we read: “Erected by Eleanor Mary Bacon in memory of her beloved children, Eleanor Bacon and Edmund Claude Bacon who died on the voyage from South Africa, June 29th and July 11th 1898, aged 6 and 4 years.” The Mass was said for the intention of this good lady, during which appropriate hymns were sung—a general Communion was offered for the same intention—Mrs Bacon in her deep mourning communicating. After Mass our chaplain in his cope blessed the two windows, and returning to the altar improvised a most pathetic prayer to suit the occasion asking Our Lord that each time the light streamed through the glass representing our dear Lord in such touching scenes of His Life, it would bear with it the special blessing of the Sacred Heart on those who gazed upon His face and on her especially who had raised these windows to the sacred memory of all she had loved and lost, and very particularly on these beloved ones who had been taken from her. The choir then sang Mendelssohn’s beautiful ‘Laudate Pueri’.*⁷⁹

79 The present plaque is of later date. It contains the words ‘Also of his wife, Eleanor Mary who died November 17th 1946 and their daughter Olive Mary (Zara) who died January 3rd 1976’

Prize Days

Prize Day was the high feast of the secular calendar, 'the joyous feast' at Upton, or as the Holt Hill Annalist put it in 1889 'the crowning of the year'. On one level these occasions could be called days of reward and encouragement; on another they were, quite simply, days of advertisement showing to parents and prospective parents what was being achieved in the schools.

In an age when 'conversation' was an attainment to be cultivated, the Distribution of Prizes at Holt Hill in 1870, the year of Vatican Council I, was marked by a 'Conversation on the Church' by the Senior pupils, whilst the younger one conversed on 'Flowers.'

The Birkenhead News ('though a Protestant paper') in the interesting column: 'People are Saying' reports, Saturday July 23rd 1892

that the annual prize distribution to the externs of Holt Hill Convent on Tuesday was a very brilliant affair. The report on the past year's work showed the Convent pupils to be holding their own with those of other seminaries in the district, the numbers of successes at the Kensington Local Examinations being especially creditable to the girls and their tutors. There was a large attendance of parents and the proceedings throughout were of very interesting description.

A far cry from the tone of the Birkenhead Advertiser in 1864.

Civic links

The presence of large numbers of Protestant pupils in both Dee House and Holt Hill was one way in which inter-church relationships improved and at Upton invitations were eventually sought by and extended to 'our kind non-Catholic neighbours who are so friendly to us.'

At Holt Hill in particular the Day School distribution of prizes became an occasion for strengthening civic links. In 1908 'His Worship the Mayor accompanied by the Mayoress presided at the

accompanied by the Mayoress presided at the distribution of Prizes to Day-Pupils. At the end of the entertainment, the Very Rev. Canon O'Toole DD⁸⁰ thanked the Mayor on behalf of the Rev. Mother and Community and the Governing Body of the School, for his presence among them. It gave them a certain status, and made them feel a necessary part of the educational equipment of the town.

His Worship replied, thanking for the very cordial reception he had received. This school, he said, was one of the best in the Borough, and the excellent instruction and high class training received in it fitted the pupils for any duty in after life. Members of the Catholic Religion were pioneers of education in this country and the first to combine religious with secular learning. Children of various denominations took advantage of the training given in this well-organised school and he congratulated the parents on their good judgement in the matter.⁸¹

Pope Leo XIII commemorated

Not that the Universal church was forgotten! At Holt Hill in 1887 the place of honour, given to our 'holy and venerable Pontiff Leo XIII⁸²', whilst at Upton that same year 'we opened the evening with the

80 Canon Aloysius Thomas O'Toole (1863-1927) Rector St Joseph's Birkenhead (1901-1925); PP Birkenhead Our Lady's (1925-1927).

81 Councillor T.L. Dodds had been bitterly opposed to the Sisters being allowed to teach in the St Joseph's Parish schools but became a great friend of the Community. He assisted them financially and withstood the jibes of his fellow-Councillors who attacked him for having changed his principles. In 1906 he attended the Pupil Teachers Annual Entertainment and Distribution of Prizes,' to which were invited besides the Reverend Managers of the various schools, the Town Councillors. The vicar General, Mgr Marsden presided. He expressed himself very well satisfied with all he had seen and heard. He was seconded by Councillor Dodds, who thanked Reverend Mother on behalf of the other Town councillors and himself for her kind invitation. He said they had all learnt many things that evening. This entertainment had been from beginning to end a thoroughly successful one, reflecting great credit on the ladies who had worked so hard to prepare it, and showing at the same time the high-class education given in this establishment. He was not aware that such good educational work was being done in the town. Taking the different items of the programme he dwelt particularly on the French scene, and remarked that the methods of teaching must be effective to produce such fluency and purity of accent. The dramatic representation of Henry V left nothing to be desired and reflected much credit on the Mistress of elocution.

82 Leo XIII (1810 -1903) was ordained priest in 1837. Elected Pope in 1878, he died in 1903.

Grand March of St Peter played on organ, pianos etc. in honour 'of this Jubilee of Jubilees. I The chaplain had distributed medals especially struck in honour of Leo XIII and the girls wore them proudly on bows of yellow ribbon. Sixteen years later, the Bishop having stipulated that his prizes were to be both useful and beautiful it was decided that

'a handsomely framed photograph of our beloved Holy Father, Leo XIII, bearing a silver plate with appropriate words, would be a suitable gift for the 1st Prize, and selected a valuable book which was handsomely bound in crushed levant leather and which bore the stamp of the house etc. for the 2nd Prize. We little thought the picture would be presented on the very day and almost at the very hour that the Venerable Vicar of Christ was breathing forth his soul into the hands of his Maker. Before the chaplain rose to read the Prize list, two little girls came forward and stood for a moment or two at the edge of the platform, holding between them the picture of him whom all felt might then perhaps be in the throes of his death agony. A murmur of sympathetic feeling made itself audible as the little picture-bearers came forward with their pathetic freight, the representation of the Venerable Prisoner of the Vatican, whose bent form leaning on a stick stands in his garden looking at his flowers. At the conclusion of the prize-giving, His Lordship (Bishop Allen) alluded with the tenderness and feeling of a loyal son of the Church to our Holy Father's dying state and spoke in words which found their echo in the hearts of every Catholic and to which the many Protestants present listened with sympathetic reverence. At 7 o'clock when the last throng of our visitors had gone and but a few of our children from a distance remained, a telephone message told us that Leo XIII the great "Lumen in Coelo" had ended his saintly career, and that a pall of darkness had fallen over the world-Christian and non-Christian'.

Prize Day Programmes

Madame d'Houët herself as early as 1852 was involved in the preparations at Lingdale. She prepared the children for their French recitations which that year were scenes from Racine's 'Athalie.'

In 1873 at Upton the distribution of prizes was accompanied by 'a concert in the woods and several well chosen recitation pieces in English, German and Italian were greatly admired.'

The programmes seem to vary, no doubt according to the resources available. In Chester, for example in 1889 'our good friend Rev. J. Robinson wrote a cantata, *La Fille du Due*', which he thought would suit the pupils 'whilst the following year the programme was simpler. *The Contest of Flowers*' was sung by the Seniors whilst 'the music and singing of the Juveniles elicited great applause.' Upton called 1891 their 'most successful ever.' The principal feature was 'The Lament of the Bride' taken from the Oberammergau Passion Play at the suggestion of the Chaplain⁸³ who had been present at Oberammergau. He himself presided at the organ whilst the children sang in German accompanied by piano, violin, harp and guitar. They were lucky in that 'the pupil who took the part of the bride had a very fine voice.' By way of contrast no doubt, the following year Upton presented 'Little Lord Fauntelroy,'⁸⁴ and Chester 'The Gypsy Girl' (Seniors) and 'Fairy Moonlight' (Juniors.)

The entertainment enabled the audience to appreciate not only the music and acting but also the deportment, general bearing, self-possession, ease and quiet composure (all phrases used at various times) of the young ladies. Much admired too was the style of elocution on which Bishop Brown placed so much stress that he himself gave a prize; Archbishop Scarisbrick OSB, frequent guest of Bishop Knight praised the 'clear distinct enunciation' and Bishop Allen at Chester in 1899 said 'the only fault he had to find was that a prize had not been given for elocution and he would remedy that by giving one himself the next year.' As

⁸³ Fr Wilfrid Dallow (1848 -1917) was resident Chaplain at Upton for over thirty years (1885 -1917) and his contribution was incalculable. He was a brilliant musician, an authority on oratorio, and his writings included a Catholic Visitor's Guide to Rome and a Book on the Passion Play at Oberammergau which was presented to King Edward VII and acknowledged.

⁸⁴ 'Little Lord Fauntelroy' had been published by Frances H. Burnett in 1886. They were similarly up-to-date in 1898 when they produced 'The Mikado' - first performance 1885.

late as 1937 Bishop Moriarty always liked the Upton entertainments ‘because the elocution was so good’.

In addition to the Bishops’ prizes for elocution others were awarded from time to time. Fr Dallow in 1898 gave one for an essay on ‘The Catholic church and the Decay of Nations’⁸⁵ and the following year he awarded ‘a book on wild flowers with remarkably good plates to the pupil who painted the best copy of a pot of pansies which he gave as a copy.’ At Chester in 1915 one child ‘gained the Gold Medal given every year by the Duke of Westminster to the candidate who in Cheshire attains the highest marks’ in the various music examinations.

Throughout the accounts of Prize Days runs the phrase ‘crowned for satisfaction.’ At Upton it would seem that the girls so honoured were indeed crowned whereas at Chester judging by Bishop Allen’s remarks in 1898 ‘I think you will agree with me that we can all lay claim to one prize -that of general satisfaction’ it would seem to have been a prize, as indeed it was at Holt Hill where, furthermore, the old French term ‘Accessit’⁸⁶ was still in use in 1878 when Miss Hughes⁸⁷ having gained three prizes for Fancy Work; History, Geography, Natural history; and General Satisfaction also received one ‘for Accessits.’ The plates inserted in the prize books as late as 1884, read ‘This Premium was Awarded to...’ but by 1919 a new plate bears a simple inscription: ‘Awarded to...’ and the title ‘Miss’ has been dropped.

Examining Bodies

The prizes awarded in many cases follow on success in public examinations and there is an interesting list of Examining Bodies to be drawn up. ‘Drawing Examinations’ under the auspices of the South Kensington Science and Art Department, include ‘perspective, solid geometry, model drawing and free hand’; there are, too, Kensington Locals, Edinburgh Locals and in time, Oxford Locals. In 1895 a pupil, who had been at Upton from the age of 7 and was then 17, was successful in ‘The First Examination of Women, Oxford’

85 This was apparently a current topic of discussion since it had been treated by Mgr John Vaughan.

86 Accessit, n.m. distinction accordée aux qui ont le plus approché du prix (Larousse).

87 One of three sisters, Katherine, Agnes and Ellen who came from Cork to be educated at Holt Hill. Since the plates are inscribed simply ‘Miss Hughes’ there is no way of knowing which sister won the prizes -Volumes 1-4 of ‘The Universe’ by F.A. Puchet.

and three Seniors 50 by their success in French, German and Euclid were exempt from a Preliminary Examination should they ever go for ‘The Higher Examination for Women’. Music Examinations were taken from Trinity College, the Royal Academy School Pianoforte Examination and the Incorporated Society of Musicians.

Exhibition of Work

A second facet of the entertainment provided was the choral singing and instrumental music, and a third the exhibition of ‘ouvrage’ so that all the desirable social accomplishments could be seen. ‘Ouvrage’ may be translated as ‘fine needlework’ but it included designs to be embroidered and extant notebooks show it to be linked to geometrical patterns. ‘Needlework and design’ was gradually expanded. 1906, for example, shows that all three schools were developing their curriculum. Chester, that year, in addition to Drawing, Fancy Needlework and various articles of Church Work (including a cotta and a stole) exhibited Literature and Science Tests~ at Holt Hill the visitors after the Entertainment in the large school room adjourned to the, gymnasium for a display of drill before moving to the Study Hall for Prizes. At Upton ‘china painting’ makes its appearance for the first time.

It is interesting to read ‘The Birkenhead News’ in conjunction with some of the activities recorded in the Society Annals. On December 1st 1900 for example there was a gathering of ‘Cheshire Notabilities’ at St George’s Hall for ‘Unique Tableaux Vivants.’ Such tableaux were familiar means of marking December 8th, with presentations varying from titles of Our Lady to scenes from the Lourdes story. And the following year ‘The Birkenhead News’ records that ‘The Miss Batt’s pupils ‘At Home’ on Wednesday next will be an attractive gathering. New dances are to be introduced by the young people; amongst them will be a “Frangnesia” -a very lively and quaint set of Chinese lancers arranged by Mrs Leslie Batt and her son Mr Harold Batt. A “Frangnesia” is one of the latest London novelties.⁸⁸ ‘At Homes’ like Prize Days were obviously discreet means of advertisement! There are, too, accounts of other local Prize Days.

88 Upton had shown off its new dances in 1917 when there was ‘a display in a very different branch of our modern curriculum, namely dancing. Several of the parents and other visitors accepted the invitation to be present, and then: praise of the grace and beautiful execution of such modern dances as ‘Petals’ and ‘Sea-pieces’ was unbounded’.

In December 1901, for example, Tranmere GHS was addressed by Lady Margaret Ismay whose great interest was in Nursing, and Birkenhead HS for Girls by Canon Robinson whose subject was ‘Women’s Education.’

Prize Day Messages

Something of the interests and personality of the Bishops is glimpsed in the accounts of the Convent Prize Days. At Chester in 1897 Dr. Allen ‘proved to his young hearers that the true philosophy of life consists in a strict adherence to faith and duty during these godless days.’ In that same year he reminded the girls at Upton that ‘they should be distinguished through life as Christians, Catholics and Upton Girls. He alluded to the good he had known our old-pupils to do in the world and told the present generation it was in their hands to keep up the excellent spirit that had existed in the past.’

On a visit to the Community and Novices in 1899 he advised them

‘to study the derivation of words. He told us that he and his priests, at their home, always have a dictionary on the table at meal-time and their conversation, turning on the meaning and derivation of words, they avoid all useless subjects, and at the same time store their minds with useful knowledge. He questioned us on how we had enjoyed “St Jerome’s letters” which he had sent us to translate from the Latin, as a holiday pastime. Those who had read them gave their ideas and then the Bishop added a few instructive remarks.’

At Prize Day that year he developed the idea of a University and showed how a thorough education in which Latin, Mathematics, the Sciences and Modern Languages, held so important a part, meant a true ‘University Course.’ He was especially pleased to remark that prizes for Callisthenics and out-door games had been gained by two pupils who had borne away most prizes in mental studies, thus realising the old saying ‘Mens sana in corpore sano.’

Bishop Singleton, who, like Bishop Allen before him, at both Holt Hill and Upton, gave a prize annually for Religious Knowledge, impressed on all ‘the necessity of fostering in youth that spirit of work which is such a source

of happiness in later years.' At Holt Hill in 1912 he exhorted the girls 'to practise faithfully the many lessons taught them during their school days. He particularly emphasised the practice of that 'maidenly modesty' which should characterise all Catholic girls.'

Bishop Moriarty in 1935 spoke of 'the necessity in these degenerate times of cultivating good taste in Art, Music, Literature and Architecture. He would like, he said, to find Upton girls always distinguished for good taste.' He offered two prizes for the best piece of work on the English Martyrs.⁸⁹

In 1945 the Uptonians whilst congratulated by Bishop, Moriarty on their achievements were warned not to think their days of learning and study over. In 1950 Bishop Murphy's words were addressed not to the girls but to their parents on 'the necessity and inestimable value of good catholic homes,' and in 1955 on 'the necessity of friendly cooperation between parents and school.'

In the 1960s there were others besides the Bishops who presided. Mgr Rees, as Chair of Governors, in 1960 declared that he hoped the parents appreciated all that was being done for their children '*for besides passing examinations there is much that money cannot buy, the social and moral training which is part and parcel of Upton.*'

On occasion there was no public distribution of prizes. Chester cancelled theirs in 1908 because of the death of Bishop Allen but 'the children received in private the recognition of their efforts and progress in their studies.' There were other reasons too. Upton in 1893 advanced an interesting reason, whilst at the same time reminding us that social accomplishments were still of great importance to the pupils there. There was no public distribution of prizes.

'Since public examinations have become, so to speak, obligatory... we consulted the Bishop on our idea of doing away with a public Prize-day, as our children had worked so hard for the examinations, that the practice

89 SS John Fisher and Thomas More were canonised in 1935

and fatigue, necessary to get up a successful entertainment, were too much for them; then so many of their parents live abroad or at a distance that the audience for the main part, would be comparative strangers. His Lordship and our well-wishers saw the prudence of our reasons, so this year, for the first time, we had no public display as heretofore. The Bishop however, came at 4.30 p.m. and gave the children their rewards. We invited four priests, our immediate neighbours, to meet his Lordship. A very short musical entertainment was given and everything passed off in a quiet agreeable manner, pleasant to our guests and pleasant for the children. We have been frequently congratulated since, for the sensible alteration in our yearly programme. The end of the year was thus very quiet and peaceful; the children were able to give themselves more assiduously to practising their old pieces to play at home, and otherwise improving themselves, in a way quite impossible in previous years; they went home very fresh and not over-worked, as we have lately seen them at the end of the year.'

Not that the new arrangement lasted for long. In 1895 'the Prize Day was public again this year, that is to say, we invited priests immediately connected with the house, the parents of the pupils, our kind non-Catholic neighbours who are so friendly to us, and some of the old children.... Our good Bishop Carroll presided.'

Elementary Education

To reflect on the life and works of the FCJs on the Wirral from 1849, is to reflect on the life and works of the Society as a whole during those same years. Similarly to study the development of these works is to study, to some degree, the development of educational provision in this country.

Following the Reform Act of 1832 “ the first Government Grant for Elementary education was designed to bring about ‘universal and national education’ from 7 to 14 years of age. Roman Catholics felt they could not accept the grant because all applications had to be channelled through the National and British Societies and there was insistence on the Authorised Version of the Bible being used in schools which accepted financial grant. Furthermore the vexed question of State inspection and control which would necessarily be linked with State Aid rumbled on and Anglicans, Methodists and Roman Catholics were equally clear that State Inspection of religious education was unacceptable. In the meantime, parishes and religious orders continued to do their best to provide ‘poor schools.’

The Catholic church’s position 1852 The first Provincial synod of the newly restored Hierarchy was held at Oscott and published a Synodal Letter on July 17th 1852. After a general introduction we find:

I. The first, and paramount subject, on which we desire to speak to you is - the EDUCATION OF THE POOR... The education of the poor has always been considered as one of the most important duties confided to the church... But where on every side, aggression has to be encountered, where every stone that is added to the building is contested, and has to be defended, where not only counteracting, but destructive, influences have to be resisted, where not merely the superstructure, but the very foundation must be secured, by endless precautions, and multiplied safeguards; the duty of attending to early education becomes complicated and difficult, and requires more serious thought,

more time, more agencies, and more vigilance, than at other times. And such is our case now.... If we wish to have a generation of Catholics to succeed the present one, we must educate it: or others will snatch it up, before our eyes.

The Bishops go one to state that there must be sufficient provision of education, '*adequate to the wants of the poor*. 'It must be universal; it must be single-sex; those '*whom God has blessed with riches, especially (those) who, from position, are the natural patrons of those around you*', are to take upon themselves the obligation of providing for the education of their destitute neighbours. Such is the urgency of the need that they are not to

rest until you see this want supplied; prefer the establishment of good schools to every other work. Indeed, wherever there may seem to be an opening for a new mission, we should prefer the erection of school, so arranged as to serve temporarily for a chapel to that of church without one. For the building raised of living and chosen stones; the spiritual sanctuary of the Church, is of greater importance than the temple made with hands.

1. We have said that our education must be up to the mark of modern demands... we must render the secular part of our education as effective, as that which others offer...

2. But while we thus wish to promote a secular instruction equal to what others offer, we consider sound faith, virtue, and piety by far the most important elements of education....

Marie Madeleine had always believed not simply in the value of education but in the value of an holistic approach, believing the total ambience to be as important as the instruction given, believing too that secular and religious instruction should be seen as an integral whole. Politicians, and educationalists, Kay-Shuttleworth, Newcastle and Forster all saw instruction as being a means to more than itself in so far as in 1870 Forster saw one of the main aims of elementary education as being to reduce crime. The Elementary Schools with which the FCJs

were associated were all seen to be attaining this end but the emphasis was never solely on social re-clamation.

School/Chapel

At Lingdale, Dee House and Upton, the Society was able to provide accommodation for Elementary Schools. It is said that often the provision of a Master's House was the main stumbling block to the setting up of such a school. The Community members already had a home in the Convent so whether the school belonged to a parish or to the Community the question of living accommodation was not an issue.

At Upton the pattern of a building used as a school room during the week and a chapel on Sunday clearly springs from the directive of the 1852 Synod, and it paved the way at Holt Hill for M. Victoire Duckett's decision in 1897, when the need for a Church at that end of Birkenhead became clear. She turned playrooms at Holt Hill into a chapel on Sundays where people from the area might hear Mass. The chapel was called St Joseph's-forerunner to St Joseph's North Road⁹⁰. In addition to Mass there was Benediction. '*Many a time when the Community were at tea, word would come that there were not sufficient persons to allow the priest to give Benediction, would the Community attend.*'⁹¹ An interesting comment showing not only the incidental sacrifices entailed, but also the liturgical requirements of the time!

Other outcomes of the Synodal Letter would be the setting up throughout of separate schools for Boys, Girls and Infants and the hope of offering an education comparable to that offered by the state, gave rise to Pupil Teachers, a concern for numbers as a grant-earning mechanism, inspection and in time, demands for improved accommodation.

Pupil Teachers

As early as 1843 Kay-Shuttleworth had introduced the notion of 'Pupil Teachers' as one way in which to meet the need for what was called 'an

90 Mrs Topham at the other end of town, also gave a room for the same purpose. In due course the Topham family bought the ground on North Road and were generous benefactors of the church -as a plaque erected in it testifies.

91 Anonymous MSS History of Holt Hill

army of teachers' if universal elementary education was to be introduced. Selected children were paid to assist and Head Teachers who trained them were paid extra. The pupil teachers themselves could after passing an examination, receive a grant to enable them to pass on to Training Colleges.

In both Birkenhead and Chester, the Sisters were part of this scheme.

By 1893 the pupil teachers were actually living in the house at Holt Hill. They celebrated with Mother Maria Mangan⁹² Headmistress at St Laurence's, the feast of Our Lady's birthday after which she was suddenly taken ill and died on September 15th. They are specially mentioned as being present at the funeral. In 1898 three pupil teachers are named in the log-book for St Laurence's Infants: May Agnes Gahan, Kate McGetrick, May I. McWatt.

In 1901, at the request of the Managers of the local Catholic Schools, a Pupil Teachers Centre was begun, the lessons at first being given in the evenings and on Saturday mornings. This eventually became a half-time day-pupil centre which made the work easier. The Centre lasted only a few years and then became part of the Secondary School.

Like the pupils of the Boarding and Day Schools they had a Prize Distribution. It seems to have followed the same pattern with an entertainment (to show what they were capable of), an address and distribution of prizes and certificates. In February 1905, priests from the various parishes, local inspectors and the head teachers from the schools to which the pupil teachers belonged formed the audience. The principal item was the performance of some of the leading scenes of 'Richard II.' After the entertainment everyone went to the gymnasium to witness a display of 'physical drill' and the evening ended with the distribution of Prizes and Certificates to those successful in gaining admission to the 'College of Preceptors', the examination having been taken in the previous December. The following year the guest list was extended to include the Town Councillors. The Vicar General, Mgr Marsden presided and his vote of thanks was seconded by Councillor Dodds.

92 M. Clare Carroll took charge of St Laurence's School 8.8.1892 assisted by M. Maria Mangan. Of a staff of seven they were two of only three certificated. M. Clare left in July 1893 and M. Maria became Head. When she died M. Margaret Mary (Surname?) took charge. Later FCJ Heads included M. Marcelina Fairclough, Cleophas Quish, Borgia (Winifred) Horner, Veronica Hayes; the last was Sister Carmel Hamilton who retired in 1987. Sister Gerard Hayes is another remembered for her work in the school.

Inspection

The Synodal Letter of 1852 praises the work of the Catholic Poor School Committee which had been set up in 1847 to liaise with the Government Committee of Council over the vexed question of inspection. Initially it was suggested that Church School Managers might present to Inspectors an assurance that the Religious Knowledge of the pupils had been inspected and found satisfactory. The Free Church of Scotland objected that that was to accept as 'satisfactory' the tenets of any religious persuasion. Catholics on the other hand, insisted that Inspectors of Catholic Schools must themselves be Catholics. Eventually it was established that grants to Catholic schools would not be dependent on inspectors asking for reassurance of religious instruction. Nonetheless, as might be expected from the Letter of 1852, the twofold examination became a feature of school life.

A Letter from the General Superior

Writing to the Society in 1871 Reverend Mother Josephine Petit told of the situation of the Sisters teaching in the Poor Schools of England and shows us, one hundred and thirty years later, that the ecumenical situation had still a long way to go!

This year the numerous Poor Schools in England find themselves in a new and critical position by virtue of the recent Education Law. Our Sisters' task has become more laborious and more difficult; the subjects for examination having become more numerous at the same time that our schools are losing the right which they have enjoyed hitherto of being examined by Catholic inspectors.

For the first time the Catholic schools are going to be inspected by Protestants, a test feared equally by the children and by their mistresses. The inspector might be hostile or prejudiced or at least one could scarcely, it seemed, expect sympathy or indulgence from him. However, it was a question of the glory of God. It was imperative to maintain their

reputation which is absolutely essential, faced with the godless teaching to which all the efforts of the impious tend in our day. Without neglecting the human means of success they prayed with fervour and with a confidence which was not mistaken. In all the schools confided to our care, without any exception; the Inspection was satisfactory, in the greatest number it was a great success which not only exceeded that of earlier years, but which has surpassed all that one could have hoped for... We hope that this success, due solely to the special protection of our Good Master, will contribute to His glory, 'sole end of all our efforts and to the honour of our holy religion in this Protestant country.

Reports of all the inspections are not extant but there are more than enough to give a flavour of what went on and of the development of the process from year to year, Inspector to Inspector and indeed from Act to Act.

Interesting sidelights can be gleaned from the Parish Notice Book. At St Laurence's, for example, in 1871 it was announced that 'the Government Inspector will examine all the schools. All children who have made 250 attendances at the school during the year have to be examined. Everyone must be in school by 10 o'clock. All must be clean, but need not be in their Sunday clothes.'

At both St Laurence's Birkenhead and St Werburgh's Chester, Mr Kynnersley HMI soon became a friend and, in the early part of the twentieth century, Mr Reep was 'a true and steadfast friend to us all.'⁹³ By 1895 a leading Protestant minister declared that St Werburgh's RC Schools were, in the opinion of the Inspectors, the best in the district and '*it is a well recognised fact that they are the best maintained, the best disciplined and the best managed schools in the city.*'

But the best discipline cannot keep measles at bay. The following year by the end of February, half the children were victims of the epidemic raging in the city and with the Government Exam rapidly approaching the Sisters anxiously awaited their fate. It is easy to imagine their surprise and gratitude

93 When M. Veronica Collins died in 1911 Mr Reep 'paid her his last tribute of respect by being present at her interment.' (Holt Hill Annals.)

when the Inspectors cancelled the examination. Easy too, to imagine their embarrassment in 1897 when Mr Ballance arrived unexpectedly and found the children's hair '*done up with curling pins etc.*' in preparation for an entertainment to be given the following evening. He and his wife were promptly invited to attend!

The principle of surprise visits was well established. Mr Ballance arrived on March 17th 1900 to find there was a half-holiday in honour of St Patrick, arranged to come back at the end of the month but instead returned on the 19th! To St Joseph then was attributed the fact that the Inspector praised highly '*the School, the Teachers and the Method*'.

It soon became practice for the Inspector not only to send a Report after his visit, but also before leaving the School to talk matters over with the Staff and give 'practical hints and suggestions for the teaching of Geography and Arithmetic as a help to the teachers.' (Chester 1907)

The surprise element was possibly never greater than at St Werburgh's Infants, Chester, in 1906

On the last day of the school year, March 31st the Head Inspector accompanied by one from South Kensington came to the school. By some negligence on the part of the care-taker, the door had been left unbolted and they got into the school during the dinner hour, when they had the place to themselves for a good half-hour. When the Mistress entered the room, she found them examining the children's Exercise Books, Drawing Books etc. which were in cases on the desks. After some apology for their intrusion, they asked for specimens of hand-work done during the year. They requested to be allowed to take a few of each kind away, and to see some work done before them. A little boy was asked to draw and colour a Narcissus and leaves which the Inspector took from a vase of flowers and placed before the child, who set about the work in a business like way and soon made a "perfect" sketch of the flower, while another modelled it in Plasticine, the two Inspectors watching the process with interest. They

were much amused when the young artist after fruitlessly searching for a green crayon to suit him, stood up and said: If you please Sir, I cannot do this properly for I have not the right green. When the work was finished, the Inspector wrote on it 'done in our presence in 25 minutes by a boy aged 7' and added it to the other papers. After a few words of congratulation on the good work done, our visitors to our intense relief left us, promising however to visit the school again, during the year, with four new Inspectors.

'Payment by results.'

Grant was 'dependent on Inspection. Since 1862 the general thrust had been that public education should be universal—but not too expensive to provide. Grant was payable in proportion to the number of children presented for examination and to the judgement of the Inspectors. St Laurence's, Birkenhead regularly merited grant, and indeed the highest possible grant, for every subject. The award was always followed by a Mass of Thanksgiving. Similarly at Upton, 'the government Examination in the Elementary School was 'excellent.' We obtained the highest grant for every subject.' (1890)

Upton St Joseph's: Finances

The official form (1878) asks about Rates of Weekly Payments and Numbers paying each rate. The return for the Elementary School at Upton is as follows:

Girls 15 @ 1d 2 @ 2d 8 @ 3d

Infants 9 @ 1d Free 3

Next Question: What determines the different rates?

Answer: Standards and pecuniary circumstances of parents.

The Cash Book kept for St Joseph's Roman Catholic School (1880 -1889) according 'to the mode of keeping and rendering accounts' (Circular dated September 1867) shows that Teachers were paid £40 per year,

(rising to £50 in 1882), Assistants £20, (rising to £25 in 1886), and Monitors £6, (rising to £20 in 1883). The FCJ Head's salary was returned to the School by way of 'Donation' and never failed to outstrip the official Grant! Even so, in some years, expenditure was greater than income. School pence totalled £14.12.2½ in 1887 and £13.2.7½ in 1888.

Under 'Expenditure' the same names occur again and again -the Coal Merchant was Parker; repairs were carried out by Quin, plumbing by Charnley, painting by Allison, the chimney was seen to by Legge, Bevan mended the clock (at a charge of 3/6) and nearly every year they bought a sweeping brush from Byrne at a cost of 2/3.

It is unclear who the first teacher in the school had been but the only teacher 1877-1884 was 'Miss Ryan' who was later joined by 'Miss Kennedy'. 'Miss Ryan' is Mother Mary who was born in Tipperary in 1825, entered in Limerick (1846), made vows in Liverpool (1850) and died at Birkenhead in 1906; M. Winifred Kennedy appears in the 1891 Census as being by then, 38 years of age, a 'qualified teacher and governess.' In 1886 'Miss Trent' arrived but went briefly to Ireland being replaced by 'Miss MacMahon', who had arrived from Liverpool: M. Clotilde MacMahon, born in Limerick in 1862, had entered at Holt Hill (1880), made vows at Ste Anne d'Auray (1883) and throughout her life worked for the cause of Catholic education in this country, especially in West Hartlepool where she went in 1891. Later she became Novice Mistress and died at Bunclody, County Wexford, February 16th 1932. By the time she left Upton, she was a certificated teacher. In 1889 M. Alphonsine Trent who having been born in Limerick (1835), entered at Lingdale (1852) made vows at Gumley (1858) returned to St Joseph's, Upton as Head and M. Mary Ryan went to Holt Hill.

In passing, it is interesting to note that the composition of the Community had so changed from 1863, that the 1891 Census shows the place of birth of the thirty-four Sisters as follows:

France 1	North of England 10
Germany 1	South of England 2
Ireland 19	Scotland 1

The Census return shows M. Clare Carrol working at Upton. She too had been born in Limerick (1854), entered at Bruff (1873) made vows at Ste Anne d'Auray (1876), and was at Upton 1889-1892 when she went to take charge of St Laurence's, Birkenhead.

Accommodation

Inspectors did not concern themselves solely with academic content.

From the beginning, what became the elementary schools had been housed in whatever accommodation was available, and, by the beginning of the twentieth century concern for lighting, sanitation and ventilation was increasing. Furthermore, the problems were compounded as succeeding Acts enforced compulsory education and raised the school leaving age: St Werburgh's Girls came to revel '*in the possession of four well-ventilated and well lighted class-rooms, each capable of accommodating 50 pupils* (emphasis added)... *A heating cell and apparatus beneath the new classroom... has replaced the old stove.* (1908)

The Reports extant for St Joseph's, Upton, show that the Inspectors appreciated the atmosphere in which education was taking place. In 1897 they mentioned specifically that the children were '*taught with much care and kindness*' and ten years later Mr F.T. Howard wrote: '*The children attending this School are well cared for and are taught with skilfulness and consideration.*' Academically '*the girls should not work their sums aloud, or count on their fingers*' (1886); and while the needlework '*deserves special praise, perhaps more attention might be given to the mending and repairing of worn garments.*' (1913) A '*pleasing feature*' of the School was the knowledge of local history but '*local geography might receive more definite attention* (1907) and Reading (*was*) a strong subject; *children appreciate what they read.*'(1913).

At Upton, it was the Society FCJ which was responsible for the elementary school since it had been started by them and they had to find the money for up-grading the building. The original elementary school had, since 1871, served the dual purpose of school and chapel. In 1890 although the government examination was '*excellent*' and they got the highest

grant for every subject, the building was giving cause for concern. In 1893 part of the problem is spelled out: ‘the offices are insufficient and not separately approached.’

Knowing that she was going to need a large sum to bring the building into line with contemporary requirements, M. Frances Gibson asked Bishop Knight if the visiting retreat priest might, that summer, preach a charity sermon, duly announced beforehand, the entrance money and offertory being devoted to the building fund. There is archival evidence to show that Bishop Knight found himself, as he put it, ‘between the two engines’ on this solution to the problem!

Letters from the Catholic School Committee show that the Committee, through the Duke of Norfolk, had tried to negotiate with the Board of Education but ‘he could do nothing owing to no-one being present who could speak from personal knowledge of the school....’⁹⁴

So, December 1893, Mother Frances went to London and accompanied by the Duke of Norfolk, she met with the Secretary of the Board of Education, Mr Kekewich. The difficulties were temporarily settled and in 1894 the Inspector overlooked deficiencies in the accommodation.

The following year, though, the blow fell and despite the excellent report for the education being given in it, the building was condemned. The Sisters’ fears were not just that the Catholic children like those of West Kirby⁹⁵ might be obliged to go to a Protestant School but that ‘what is worse, a Board School, where no Religion is taught, may be established in the village.’ In 1896 the building was extended by the addition of a porch and cloakrooms. But it was not enough.

In 1907 we read that ‘a common playground for boys and girls is not a satisfactory arrangement and especially as the approach to the boys’ offices is so near to that of the girls; the cloakroom accommodation is not very convenient and as regards the girls is insufficient. It is very desirable that new boys’ offices should be erected

94 Letter dated 7 December 1893

95 The reference to West Kirby is not by chance. The pastor, Fr Cronin, had known the FCJs in Chester and in 1907 the Sisters from Upton opened a small school at 10, Park Road, (which was eventually handed over to the Sisters of Evron). Once again they were the first sisters in the parish and since there was no Catholic Elementary School, they opened a Sunday School in the following year.

at the end of the playground used by the boys.' One feels that the judgement in 1910 has been compounded by a disciplinary problem. The Assistant Medical Officer had visited the school and found that '*there was no water in the boys' lavatory basin the teacher being afraid of the clothing being wet by splashing. It would be well if arrangements could be made or the boys always to have a supply of water. Three towels should be provided for the Girls and Infants each week.*'

Numbers continued to rise. From 60 in 1895 there were over 80 in 1898. Many of the children were not Catholics but their presence meant that the school could be kept open. M. Anastasia McGill writing on behalf of M. Frances Gibson to Fr Mottram at West Kirby, says that M. Frances, Canon Dallow and Canon (later Bishop) Singleton are all agreed that since there are '*not thirty Catholic families on our books, and as many of these live beyond school distance... if the Protestants leave us... our school could be closed. Many of the Protestants are staunch to us because their Mothers and Grand Mothers have been educated here and they cling to the Convent.*'

It was not until 1914 that the original 1863 building was really developed. At that time the back wall of the side chapel was broken through, a partition put in and the rooms so formed given to the Infants; stairs were added and three rooms constructed on the top floor. There was a cloakroom on each floor and a separate staff cloakroom. Furthermore '*the whole building is now supplied with electric light*' ⁹⁶(sic). Bishop Singleton visited in the first week after the school took possession.

St Joseph's Building Fund

The overall cost seems to have been £2,014.0.0. There is extant a list of events held over the years to help pay off the debt. A Garden Party a year raised £150-£200; Socials and Whist Drives produced from £4.15.0 to a record, on St Patrick's Day 1921, of £13.17.0; Annual Collections averaged £5.6.3; and the proceeds from concerts ranged from £11.4.5 to £3.17.10½.

96 Whereas the FCJs had paid for the old oil lamps, the LEA agreed to pay for the electricity!

New Accommodation desperately needed.

At the beginning of 1934 there were 191 children in the little school, but pressure was reduced later in that same year by the opening of the new school at Moreton and the numbers at St Joseph's fell to 112. They then rose again and the Managers were faced with the implementation of yet another Act. In 1937, Fr Corcoran, Chairman, told a Managers' Meeting that no steps had as yet been taken to meet the needs of the new Education Bill, but there seemed to be no means of extending St Joseph's and therefore accommodation for pupils between the ages of 14 and 15 would have to be arranged for elsewhere.

The fabric continued to be the responsibility of the Community. That same year, the School playground and the boys' lavatories were repaired at the Convent expense. Parishioners organised a jumble sale to help meet these expenses. The Sisters paid bus fares for children from out-lying districts, until, in October 1934 the Catholic Education council made a grant for that purpose. From April 1945 all Cheshire County bus fares were paid by the LEA.

Immediately after the War, Managers were faced with the implementation of Secondary Education. In the summer of 1947, St Joseph's became a Junior School, no longer an all-age Mixed, and places were found for the children over 11 years of age in neighbouring Catholic Secondary Schools, St Hugh's and Our Lady's. In 1950 the school was granted Aided Status.

At the Full inspection in 1952 the overcrowding was such that the Inspector suggested that all non-Upton children should be refused admission, but this was judged impractical since there was no Catholic School at Greasby or Heswall.

For several years after that, as numbers rose to new levels, - reaching 203 in 1960, the Managers pinned their faith in the proposed school on the Woodchurch Estate as the solution to the overcrowding at Upton. In 1956 they recorded their distress at there being no field for games, which in a mixed school without a hall and only a very small playground on the side of a road was a great drawback. They asked permission to use the Parish Hall at Greasby but the LEA said it was too far away; they asked to use the old Church at Moreton but again were

refused permission. Then in 1960 Canon McGonagle announced that he had hopes of plot on which to build a new St Joseph's. The erection of the school was approved by the LEA and the Town Planning Committee. In 1965 the FCJs announced that, after a hundred and two years, they would withdraw from the school when it moved to its new premises, which it did in January 1966.

The last FCJ Headmistress was Sister Christine Hayes who had succeeded Mother Frances Keane in 1950. Also still on the staff was Sister Mary Joseph Pemberton whose appointment had been approved by the Managers in 1943⁹⁷, making her, surely, one of the longest serving teachers in the Primary School.

New churches

The Parish too had long grown out of its Convent home.

On the last Sunday of 1939 the parishioners of Upton received unexpected joy. Fr Corcoran who since 1931 had been saying three Masses each Sunday, two at Upton and one at Greasby, announced that he had bought three acres of land in Greasby as a site for a new Church at a cost of £1,500, £1,200 of which he had already paid. Permission had been sought from the Ministry of Health to erect a temporary church on the site. He then went on to read a letter from Bishop Moriarty in which Upton was praised for its apostolic work in providing the funds for the new church and indeed he called Upton a parent church, Mother church. Fr Corcoran then endorsed the Bishop's tribute by dwelling on the work done since 1863 by the Upton Parish and Schools—keeping alive and spreading the Faith in so many districts of the Wirral. In 1944 Greasby became a separate parish and Fr Maurice Stone came to Upton.

He brought tremendous enthusiasm and raised large sums of money to bring to reality the dream of a church for Upton itself. In 1945 the Boarding School St Patrick's Day Concert which had not been meant for any public display, only for community, school and chaplain, was at the latter's request repeated for the parish. He announced it from the pulpit

97 At that same Managers Meeting the resignation of Mother Gabriel Fleming was accepted. Fr Corcoran in expressing appreciation of her many years of devoted service spoke of her 'peculiar and particular gift of winning the affection of the children.'

and fixed an entrance fee with the result that £15 was collected for the Building Fund. The Elementary School gave a concert and raised £30. Their programme consisted of 'Tarcisius' a play for the Infants; and two humorous sketches 'The Weary Policemen' and 'The Beauty Parlour' performed by middle and senior classes. But the big event of 1945 was the Garden Fete, held in the convent Garden on the wettest day in living memory. 'All the afternoon and evening a steady stream of people grimly paid their entrance fee and waded in mackintoshes, sou'westers and wellingtons through mud to the fete, where they made their purchases in the pouring rain, or watched the children dance their national dances in wellingtons on marshy lawns.' Nonetheless almost £1,000 was realised.

When on August 31st 1954 the new St Joseph's was opened by Bishop Murphy the Convent Girls formed the Choir; Practices had started well before the end of the summer term and were held from time to time during the holidays. The Bishop and over 80 priests assembled in the gym where they vested before walking in solemn procession to the church across the road. When all the ceremonies were over they, together with Sir Adrian Gilbert Scott, the architect, and the builders sat down to lunch in the children's dining room which had been newly painted for the occasion. Until the presbytery was built, Fr Stone continued to live in the Chaplain's house⁹⁸.

98 In time St Peter's Noctorum and St Paul's Ford Estate have been carved out of St Joseph's.

Night Schools

St Laurence's Parish Notice Book bears witness to the importance attached to Continuation Classes for those whose education had been minimal.

16.11.1879 There will be night school on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings. We believe that there are many young men in the parish to whom this would be a great boon.

and more than twenty years later (22.9.1901) there is this announcement and exhortation:

We wish to remind the young people of both sexes that the evening classes are about to re-open in our schools, and we hope that as many as can will avail themselves of the classes so that they may be able to hold their own in the struggle of life with their non-Catholic neighbours.

Day Continuation School were part of the provision of the Fisher Act in 1903. Long before that there had been efforts made, in the evenings after their work and after the regular school day, to help those who had been deprived of religious instruction and elementary education. As more and more people realised the opportunity being offered and the value which accrued, the State began to take the Night Schools also under its wing.

Birkenhead

As we have seen, over a hundred young girls and domestics were attending 'Sunday School' or 'School on Sunday' in Birkenhead by 1858. That continued. There were also Night Classes begun at St Laurence's in 1892 with the avowed intention of, doing good to souls as well as improving the minds of the scholars' and on October 22nd 1897 the Night School was re-constituted in liaison with the School Board. The numbers amazed the Inspectors. The initial enrolment was between 60 and 70; soon it was over 80 and '*towards the end of November the School Board complimented us on our numbers declaring that we had quite*

outdone their classes which daily decreased, although we opened a month later than they did.'

The First Friday of July 1898 brought the following report: '*The Girls School has been very successful. The instruction is exceedingly good and the order and steady attendance deserve great praise.*' The Sisters were equally grateful for the fact that one evening when the HMI was present and they closed classes with Night Prayers as usual, '*far from finding fault he was most reverent and respectful*'.

Catholics were keen for education but poverty among them was crippling. There was a deposit of 3/- to be paid in advance and this '*is a great drawback to our girls the majority of whom are very poor.*' Nonetheless when cookery lessons were added to the curriculum in 1901 there was even greater desire evinced by the older girls and young married women.

Payment by results

Upton also held 'Continuation Classes' on Mondays and Friday, from 7.30 p.m. to 9.05 p.m. (Presumably, the extra five minutes was for Night Prayers.) The age of the students is given as '*boys from 13 upwards and young women who during the day are at work; some married women came too.*' The weekly fee was set at two-pence and the Sisters found the students in the Night Classes were very attentive and keen for instruction.

The Classes were started in 1897 and the intention was not simply to try to keep the Catholics of the Village together during the first few years after leaving school, but also to keep them from joining classes offered by Protestants. The Sisters received Government grant for the Night School which meant that they could not ostensibly teach Religion but the ambience would be there!

The following summary of the Reports on the Upton Night School gives an insight into the Subjects offered as well as to the method by which payment was calculated.

Upton; St Joseph's Roman Catholic School (Mixed)

1898 Average Attendance: 46.8

Total number of hours of instruction of all Registered Scholars,
divided by 12: 34

Variable Grant:

Number of complete 12 hours' instruction at 1/6⁹⁹

Arithmetic	36
Agriculture	39
Vocal Music	62
Domestic Economy	35
Needlework	82

Fixed Grant £17.0.0

Variable Grant £19.1.0

Total 36.1.0

1899 Average Attendance: 41.8

Total number of hours (as above): 380

Variable Grant:

Number of complete 12 hours' instruction at 1/6

Physiography	47
Hygiene	18
Book-keeping	8
Vocal Music	69
Needlework	124

99 The alternative 'grant' was 1/- and Upton always got 'maximum grant.'

Fixed Grant:	£19.00.0
Variable Grant	£19.19.0
Total	38.19.0
Reduction ¹⁰⁰	2.4.0
	£36.15.0
Drawing Grant at 1/9 (32)	2.16.0
	£ 39.11.0

1900 Average Attendance: 39.2

Total number of hours (as above): 299

Variable Grant:

Number of complete 12 hours' instruction at 1/6

Arithmetic	22
French	51
Vocal Music	52
Needlework	89

Fixed Grant	£14.19.0
Variable	£16.1.0
Total	£31.0.0
Drawing @ 1/9 (29)	£2.10.9
	£33.10.9

Average Attendance: 36.2

Total number of hours (as above): 298

Variable Grant

¹⁰⁰ The Pro forma does not show the reason for the reduction.

Number of complete 12 hours' instruction at 1/6

English Literature	58
Chemistry	32
Vocal Music	57
Needlework	87

Fixed Grant	£14.18.0
Variable Grant	£17.9.6
Total	£32.7.6
Drawing @ 119 (29)	£2.10.9
	£34.18.3

For 1902 The pro-forma is different; there is nothing more than a summary:

Number of Hours Recognized: 4012

Rate of Grant per 20 hours @3/-	£30.1.10
Grant-Chemistry 392 hours @ 4/-	£ 3.18.5
	£34.0.3
Supplementary Grant	£ 5.13.5 ¹⁰¹

Board of Education Minute 1901

A Board of Education Minute, presented to both Houses of Parliament, July 3, 1901 established the Regulations for Evening Schools and Classes. After setting out the Rules, the Board presents lists of Subjects which can be offered and from this and from the annotations on our Archival copy we can see the programme offered.

101 There is no indication as to what the Supplementary Grant was for.

SCHEDULE OF THE SUBJECTS OF INSTRUCTION
RECOGNIZED BY THE BOARD IN EVENING SCHOOLS AND CLASSES FOR THE
PURPOSES OF GRANTS.

Group I *Rudimentary Group*

- i. Reading, Writing and Arithmetic—these may be counted as one subject
- ii. The Elements of Drawing¹⁰²
- iii. Needlework
- iv. Vocal Music

Group II General Subjects

- i. Geography and History¹⁰³—these may be counted as one subject
- ii. Life and Duties of a Citizen, or Political Economy.

Group III *Language and Literature*

- i. English
- ii. Latin
- iii. French
- iv. German
- v. Any other Language

Group IV *Mathematics*

See the Regulations of the Directory of the Board.

Group V Science

See the Regulations of the Directory of the Board¹⁰⁴

Group VI *Commercial Subjects*

- i. Book-keeping
- ii. Commercial Correspondence and Office Routine

¹⁰² ii. iii. iv. are underlined in pencil and annotated 'Night Classes 1901', in the pamphlet extant in the Archives.

¹⁰³ Geography and History are underlined and M. Frances Gibson has written in the margin 'Unless when school meets scholars prefer Chemistry'

¹⁰⁴ The Annotations reads: Alternative Course in Chemistry unless when school meets scholars prefer History and Geography.

iii. Shorthand

Group VII *Manual Instruction*

- i. Wood-work
- ii. Metal-work

Group VIII *Technological Subjects - Theoretical and Practical Instruction in:-*

- i. Laundry-work
- ii. Domestic Economy
- iii. Cookery
- iv. Gardening
- v. Any other subject approved by the Board of Education as of Educational value

Group IX Art.

See regulations of the Directory of the Board

N.B. - In all subjects the Syllabus must be approved by the Board and arrangements should be made, so far as practicable, to provide satisfactorily progressive course or courses for students attending in successive seasons.

Remembering how at the time of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887¹⁰⁵ the Convent had been eager to let the Village know they were celebrating the occasion, it is interesting to see how even ten years later there is still misapprehension! Protestants as well as Catholics enrolled in the Night School and many of them 'questioned our Mothers about the dungeon and the punishments which they thought existed in the Convent and they said they could not understand how we could be so happy and look so cheerful if these really existed. Our Mothers assured them that they did not and when they found we did not try to convert them as their friends had foretold them we should, they became as friendly and as devoted as our own Catholic scholars.' The following year, the HMI was much struck by the

105 The account of this celebration follows on Page 98

docility and respect manifested by the boys and compared their conduct with that of other Night Schools where the boys seemed to have far less respect for the masters.

At the end of its first year, the Inspector's Report states: The School has made an excellent start. The teaching has been very successful and the scholars very regular in their attendance.' In the Published Night School List of the Cheshire county Council, Upton came out second for Attendance. By 1900 French was being offered in the Night School and the HMI proclaimed it the best in the District. He expressed himself amazed at the way in which 'such a country place' could keep up such a good attendance.

Bishop Allen took a keen interest in the School. He paid surprise visits from time to time, and enjoyed listening to the Recitations and Singing. Clearly his purpose was to encourage both the teachers and the scholars. On one Christmas visit, 1899, he exhorted them to persevere in their attendance, impressed on them the necessity of being educated if they wished to obtain good situations and said that he could tell from their good attendance that they appreciated what was being offered them.

Outreach

Roman Catholic Inmates of Workhouses

In 1867 a petition was presented to the House of Lords and Commons regarding the religious provision for Roman Catholic inmates of Workhouses who were not allowed an equal facility for instruction and practice of their religion with the Protestants. It pointed out that the law, as then constituted, did not provide for the education of Catholic children, according to their religion. On the contrary even under the most favourable circumstances, Catholic pauper children were being educated by Protestant teachers, and required to use school books which contain matter opposed to the teaching and belief of their Church.

Parliament therefore, is being asked to provide by law that the RC adult inmates of Workhouses may have full freedom for the practice of their religion, with the ministration of a duly recognized Chaplain and furthermore that the Guardians of the Poor in each Union shall be required to provide for the education of the Catholic pauper children, in accordance with the religion to which they belong. (A sign perhaps of the urgency of the matter is the notation that 'The petition may be signed by women'.)

Mr John Yates¹⁰⁶

The question of religious provision for Catholics who found themselves in the Workhouses was one for which Catholic laymen took an active responsibility. In 1879, for example, John Yates, as President of the Liverpool Catholic Club wrote to Dr O'Reilly, Archbishop of Liverpool, about the appointment' of Catholic Chaplains in Workhouses and gaols. The matter was about to be brought before Parliament and if necessary it would be made 'a Catholic question at the ensuing general election¹⁰⁷. In 1886 he wrote to the Officials at Walton Workhouse pointing out that 'it is in accordance with the spirit of the age that nothing shall be done that shall, tend towards the alteration of the creed of children whose

106 Mr Yates, related to M. Isabella Yates, was mentioned earlier in connection with the Society's legal affairs.

107 Lancashire Record Office RCLv

position renders them unable to protect themselves.' Nonetheless, his request that Catholic teachers be allowed in to instruct the Catholic children is rejected as 'impossible.' Three years later, unable to be present at a Meeting called to discuss the question, he begs that 'if a subscription list be entered at the meeting my name may be put down for £20.' A similar struggle was waged over the Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institute.

FCJs in Birkenhead and Chester.

Against this backdrop, the Sisters in Birkenhead and Chester gained access to the Workhouses. In Chester they were visiting at least as early as 1888 since in that year the Diocesan Inspector was allowed to examine the Religious Knowledge of the workhouse children. The future Bishop Singleton was the Examiner and his Report reads:

I am very satisfied with the examination of these children. They do credit to the persons who have charitably undertaken to instruct them; those of the higher divisions who frequent the Sacraments seem to have been carefully instructed in everything which concerns these holy practices.

Many of the children went to Holy Communion each month. There were too converts and returning Catholics amongst the older people and amongst the staff

It was not until 1901 that access was gained to the Workhouse in Birkenhead. The annals record that 'after long waiting and much opposition, we have at last gained a footing in the workhouse.' Once a week, two FCJs, M. Victoire Duckett and M. Aloysius Power, were allowed some hours visiting the women's hospital-wards, and on Sunday two others went to give instructions, and lead the rosary and hymns. The devotions were held in the large dining hall, where about 100 men, women and children attended together. The avowed aim was to cheer and console those who came to them, and they felt that God was with them in their efforts. Women residents especially seem to have been touchingly grateful.

Improving Relationships with the Authorities

Not too much had changed since 1864, in that once again they

'figured in the local periodicals, which stated that the 'religious garb' had been seen too much of late; that the authorities were foolish in allowing nuns to visit the Workhouse, where discontent would soon be felt among the inmates, and that those in official positions, would only have themselves to blame when later the seeds of discord had taken root.'

Those in authority had treated them well and the porter was always on the lookout for the nuns so that they might not have to ring the bell! He was particularly impressed that these 'ladies' turned out voluntarily in all weathers!

As in Chester, there were people received into the church; first confessions and first Communions celebrated and many death beds attended. In 1917 three women came back to the church after a total of 100 years since their last confessions. The way in which prejudice was disappearing is shown by the fact that by 1910 the Sisters were allowed to visit whenever they liked and the whole building was open to them. Most touching was the care taken by the non-Catholic matron in 1910 to prepare for the First Communion of two residents, a woman of 53 and a child of 12. The matron decorated the altar with white flowers using her own best vases.

On that occasion one of the day pupils from Holt Hill sent her own First Communion dress for the child and a large cake as well. The Convent pupils frequently gave the old people a treat by performing items which they had prepared for other concerts—such as the various relief funds in 1915. '*How the audience laughed at the jokes and clapped at the dancing and singing can be better imagined than described'*

In time (1918) a new branch of work opened up in the Workhouse and the Sisters gave instruction to ten paralysed or otherwise disabled children who had been in the "Workhouse all their lives but up to then had received no instruction. At that time too, the Workhouse Infirmary was housing soldiers wounded in the War '*extremely sad, most pitiful examples of crippled manhood*' and these too the Sisters took under their wing.

In 1919 the visits to the Workhouse were transferred to the Irish Sisters of Charity as was the work in the House of Refuge for Girls near St Werburgh's School. St Margaret's Home for poor Catholic girls had been founded in 1888 at 23, Priory Street, Birkenhead.

Refuge for Girls

There was seen to be what is called 'a crying need' and Father (later Canon) Keoghan who was at St Werburgh's resolved to begin one on a small scale and asked the FCJs to help him. He rented a house near the church. Ladies associated with Holt Hill supervised the work which was formally opened by Bishop Knight on June 19th 1888. The FCJs visited and gave instruction three times a week. In time the 'Little Servants of the Mother of God' took over the work and later still under the Irish Sisters of Charity it developed into St Margaret's Home, Mersey Rd. South, Rock Ferry.

Mother Xavier McKenna

Just before the transfer took place, M. Xavier McKenna, who had been most zealous in attending to the work died. Herself a pupil at Holt Hill she had been one of the early missionaries in Canada before returning to Bellerive and then Holt Hill as Mistress in the Preparatory School. But visiting the Workhouse, and latterly the soldiers, was her great joy. She spent her free time preparing surprises for them or making bandages. It was said 'they could have no warmer champion' than Mother Xavier.

The clergy remarked that it was practically a miracle that during the 18 years they had been involved in the work, there had never been the slightest difficulty with any of the authorities or officials. It was at this time that Canon O'Toole said '*Holt Hill is a mine of gold in Birkenhead though you may not know it.*'¹⁰⁸ Since he was, apparently, not much accustomed to make fine speeches it was considered praise indeed.

108 It is from this remark that the title of the present tribute is taken.

Work for Poor Missions

Outreach of different type also centred on Holt Hill. An anonymous, un-dated manuscript says that

'Ladies, some of them former pupils of our Boarding School and Day School meet twice a month to sew for three or four hours, making and mending vestments for the Poor Churches. His Lordship the Bishop counts much on these ladies for the needs of his poorer parishes. A room in the Convent is devoted to their use on these days and one of the Community is a member of the Council. The Lady members are responsible for the purchase of materials required.'

Inserted into the text is the following:

Association of the Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
and of Work for Poor Missions

Translation of the Autograph Letter of His Holiness

The Head Association at Rome, for the Perpetual Adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament and for Helping Poor Churches together with the Associations affiliated to it, deserve a special recognition from us not only for the diligence with which they carry on their pious work, but also for having presented to us on the occasion of our Jubilee, a large assortment of requisites for Divine Service, ...

It is also our earnest wish that Bishops would encourage the spread of those Associations...

21st December 1908

Pius X

Shrewsbury Branch

On the death of the Right Reverend James Brown the first Bishop of Shrewsbury, on October 14th 1881, the Right Reverend Edmund Knight, who had been consecrated as Bishop Auxiliary in 1879, was translated to Shrewsbury on April 5th 1882. During his visitations throughout the Diocese which until 1895 included the Diocese of Newport and Menevia, when the Right Reverend Francis Mostyn, was consecrated Bishop of Menevia, the poverty of many of the Missions suggested the idea that a Work Society was wanted, to answer the pressing needs of the Diocese, one capable of procuring and repairing vestments, altar linen etc., necessary for the due honour of God's worship. After much consideration, His Lordship, the Bishop, made known the idea, to the clergy and principal Catholic Ladies of the Diocese. The suggestion was warmly received, and without delay, under the Patronage of His lordship, the Bishop, was formed (sic) and consisted of:-

A President – Vice-Presidents

Acting Vice President

The Council, Secretary and Treasurer

and

The Reverend Director.

A letter of Affiliation with the Mother House of Association, was sent from Rome and on April 5th 1885 the Shrewsbury Branch of the Association of the Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and of Work for Poor Missions, was established at the Convent of the Faithful Companions of Jesus, Holt Hill, Birkenhead. It is here that the Active Members assemble for about three hours, on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of each month and weekly during Lent. One of the Community is a member of the Council.

and takes part in all that is connected with the Work Society. Many Indulgences are attached to this good work...

The Work Society is supported by the subscriptions of the members and a public exhibition is held annually at the convent, both honorary and active members, as well as some of the clergy are present. His Lordship the Bishop presides, and in a short discourse gives an account of the progress of the Society -the work completed-work asked for and supplied, subscriptions together with a statement of the year's receipts and expenditure. All money matters are in the hands of the secretary and the Lady Members are responsible for the purchase of material required

When vestments etc. are wanted, the priests of the various missions, send their requests to His Lordship, the Bishop, who endorses the list, which is then sent to the Convent to be attended to during the year... A printed Report of the Work Society is sent out annually to the Clergy of the diocese and to the Lady Members.

In-Service Training for the Sisters

Miss Scott

From 1893 onwards the name of 'Miss Scott', 'Miss Rose Scott' (invariably with the appellation 'Oxford BA') appears regularly in the Annals. That first year, she gave a month long summer school at Upton, to twelve of the teaching Sisters from Liverpool, Birkenhead, Chester and Upton to help them help pupils pass the University Examinations. M. Frances Gibson lists nine as 'staying on after the annual retreat.' The visitors she names include M. Anna McGrath, M. Philomena Kelly and M. Beatrice Robinson.

Miss Scott was, apparently, indefatigable giving a three hour lesson daily, and being available at all times for those who '*wished to show her our difficulties*'. Wearing her cap and gown, she also initiated them in Latin and Mathematics.

Throughout the following academic year she gave weekly assistance at Upton and paid a visit of some days in January to help with any difficulties. Once again she gave lessons in Latin and Maths. From Easter to the time of the Public Examinations they sent her the candidates' papers weekly. She was so interested in their progress and success that she asked to be allowed to give a prize for the best result. The award, 'Shakespeare's Female Characters' was awarded publicly on Prize Day.

In August of that same year, she travelled from London and this time for the 22 Mistresses gathered around her from the Northern houses she added to the Latin and Maths, a Course of lectures on Psychology.

The Annals of 1894 throw light on this choice of subject matter. '*This year we hope to send some pupils for Mathematics and German in the Senior Grade and for Latin in the lower. Critics are fond of remarking that convents shirk these subjects.*'

Miss Scott was clearly intent on helping the Sisters confound the critics. In 1895 she presented two prizes, two handsome books, to encourage the pupils and in September gave Utopians and some of the examinees of Bellerive and Holt Hill an excellent lecture on the

method of study, the use and abuse of examinations. She also gave them a short sketch of the literature of the Oxford Syllabus for the following year.

She took to setting the questions for the internal examinations and on more than one occasion marked them herself.

In 1896 ‘the traditional College assembled at Upton to go through a course of studies under Miss Scott. As some of our advanced pupils are going up for Matriculation in June, it became necessary for us to go through certain parts of the course ourselves’.

In 1897 in addition to the traditional summer school, Miss Scott gave the pupils an interesting and instructive lecture on the advantages of education, its bearing on character and the method of study.

Nor were Miss Scott’s classes the only input. By 1894 our Mothers had been previously taking a course of lectures from a Master in Birkenhead (in Perspective and Solid Geometry) and in 1895 M. M. John Ferguson attended lectures on Hygiene in Liverpool.

Certification

The younger members of the Communities set about obtaining their certification by following approved Courses. It is not clear how M. Cajetan McCullough acquired her qualification but the result arrived on November 17th 1897. She had passed both Part I and Part II of the Certificate for Secondary Education but was not qualified for Physical Training. The following year, 1898, M. Philomena Kelly¹⁰⁹, M. Mildred Evans¹¹⁰ and M. Beatrice Robinson¹¹¹ began

109 M. Philomena Kelly (1856 -1925) had been a pupil at Holt Hill. From the Novitiate she went to Exeter, then to Paisley where she built up the Secondary School and finally to Bellerive. In her time there, the school gained Recognition. She died at Holt Hill 2/12/1925 and is buried at Upton.

110 M. Mildred Evans (1875 -1956) was educated at Dee House and Upton. Her lifelong love of geology possibly links with the remark that the Upton geology results in 1891 ‘were the highest on the University list.’ In 1903 she joined the staff of the newly opened Sedgley Park Training College and remained there until her death.

111 M. Beatrice (1875-1945) is described as being ‘from Bellerive’ but she was destined to have links with the Wirral since she became Head Mistress of the Day School at Holt Hill.

M. Beatrice is a good example of the way in which the Sisters went about gaining successive qualifications. Educated at Gumley, after her novitiate at St Anne’s, she went to Upton to study for her Matriculation with M. Anastasia Magill. She then went to St Mary’s Hall, Liverpool. Having gained her Cambridge Certificate she taught at Bellerive for ten years, going to St Patrick’s twice a week to take the night classes. In 1911 she went to Holt Hill and under her guidance the enrolments rose rapidly from 98 day

classes at St Mary's Hall, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool for the Cambridge Certificate for Secondary Education¹¹². In addition lectures twice a week were given at Upton by Fr Maher S.J. from Stonyhurst on Logic and Psychology. ‘We trust our dear Lord will bless the efforts we are making for the good of education.’

No date is given but of Sophie Walsh¹¹³ who was Art Mistress at Holt Hill we are told when the exigencies of the times required new qualifications, she set to work with indomitable energy and in spite of her age, attended the School of Art and won her Art Master’s Certificate.

M. Cajetan was not qualified to teach PT but in 1905 the situation had to be remedied since all teachers in Birkenhead were obliged to qualify themselves for drill. The women religious of the neighbourhood did not attend the public classes; rather a special class was organised and met at Holt Hill every Saturday to go through the same course, which consisted of 16 lessons, both theoretical and practical. Between FCJs and Oblates of Mary Immaculate from three neighbouring convents there was a class of 36. It was a trying ordeal for all, but the master did his utmost to make everything as easy as possible for them.

In November of that same year a course of lectures on European History was given, also at Holt Hill, by a professor of Liverpool University. The lectures were judged most interesting and there was great appreciation for the tact shown by the lecturer in his treatment of religious points. This last an interesting comment in the light of ‘History for Catholic Children’ and of the concessions made less than thirty years previously. In 1872 after Protests from the Protestant Alliance, Cardinal Manning had been persuaded to withdraw from ordinary lesson time, reading material which contained doctrinal teaching and references unfavourable to the Reformation. In 1898, the FCJs in the Night School in Birkenhead expressed the hope that book prizes awarded by the Council would be suitable for Catholic girls. Being allowed to choose them themselves, they ‘selected nice Catholic tales so (hoped) that good was done to souls at least indirectly.’

scholars to over 300. In 1913 she began to study for her BA using what time she had in the evenings and at weekends. She was one of the first in the society to receive her degree.

112 M. Frances records 21/12/1900 ‘Sent fees for Cambridge students to Mt. Pleasant: £14.14.0

113 M. Sophie Walsh (1852-1917) spent 44 years at Holt Hill as Art Mistress.

Qualifications tended still to be gained locally; in the summer of 1912, for example, the teaching members of the Community and the Novices had a course of lectures on Psychology at Upton but by 1919, despite the War, Sisters were away during the summer '*being educated by holiday courses in University towns.*'

The Development of the Secondary Schools

Like the Elementary School, the Secondary Schools too increased in numbers thanks to the reputation they enjoyed but increase in numbers made demands on accommodation.

After their ‘preliminary ‘inspection in December 1919, for example, Dee House were left with ‘a definite hope of our becoming recognised as an Organised Secondary School, conditionally, of course, to our improving staff and accommodation.’ A dormitory became a Science Room; the community combined Common Room and Refectory ‘sacrificing ourselves for the Advancement of Science.’ The inconvenience bore fruit in the 1924 Report: ‘much credit is due to those in authority for the substantial progress that has been made, the school is in very good hands and is doing most praiseworthy work in adding to the educational facilities of the district.’ Nonetheless Dee House was destined to be handed over to the Ursuline Sisters in 1925.

Holt Hill

The HMI Report on Holt Hill for 1905, speaks of the buildings ‘which are situated on a high and healthy position’ as excellent, the apparatus and equipment as very good, and ‘living accommodation and provision for the comfort and recreation of the pupils being all that could be desired.’ But by 1937 there were 308 pupils and by 1956,508 -and although there were by then 17 classrooms the ‘specialist’ rooms are described as ‘very small’ (geography), ‘tiny’ (music room) and there were no changing rooms or showers and no playing field.

There were further General Inspections in 1908, 1910, and 1937. The overall reports witness to the fact that ‘work proceeds smoothly and steadily and the girls appear very happy. They are clearly being trained in many good habits, and they accept the established conditions of the school cheerfully and readily.’ (1908) In 1910 at the end of each lesson they made a collection of exercise books, applying to the Mistress for a few good ones, and a few weak ones which they took ‘to the Parlour where they scrutinised them at their leisure.’

The Birkenhead foundation had begun as a Boarding School in 1852; a small Day School was opened in 1886 and at first was kept separate from the Boarding School. In 1901 a large new building was erected to supply the demands for a place of education for the Catholics of the town especially with a view to the needs of Catholic Teachers. M. Victoire Duckett was responsible for the planning of the building and for raising funds. With the opening of the new building the Boarding and Day Schools combined. The School was recognised in 1903 as a grant-earning Secondary School by the Board of Education. In 1932 the Boarding School closed to provide more accommodation for the Day School and under the 1944 Education Act it was recognised as a Direct Grant Grammar School.

The 1945 Annals give a graphic sense of the activity involved during the Summer Holidays in providing accommodation for growing numbers. 'The large library had to be turned into a refectory for hot dinners which are delivered every day for nearly two hundred children. The tables, folding benches and cutlery are provided by the Education Committee. What used to be the first parlour makes quite a cosy library, and the second parlour has been beautifully painted and rearranged. The nuns' refectory of former days has been turned into a dining room for the Kindergarten department.'

There was no Inspection between 1937 and 1956 when the Report draws comparisons with the school of twenty years earlier. In 1937 there were 308 pupils; in 1956 508 (356 in the Upper School and 152 in the Lower).

In September 1955 72 girls had been admitted—27 special or reserved places for Birkenhead, 7 for Wallasey, 7 for Cheshire and 31 residuary places. Fees for these latter ranged from nil on an income of £390 to full on an income of £754 with a reduction of £52 of annual income for every additional child. In the school as a whole 44 residual places were paying no fees, 8 were paying full fee. Of the Upper School 63% were from Birkenhead, 16% from Wallasey and 21% from Cheshire. There were 32 in the VI Form and the 196 girls who had left the Upper School in the previous three years were accounted for as follows:

University:	7
Training Colleges:	29

Music	I
Clerical positions	33
Nursing	25
Policewomen	2
Lab Assistants	7
Industry or shops	92.

Educational theory raises its head in the report when the question of grading and setting is introduced. The Upper School admitted about 70 children a year and in the first three years there was no grading and no setting. English and French were relatively strong, Maths and Science relatively weak, this weakness being attributed to 'large classes and the absence of grading by ability in the subjects where this is appropriate.' The Inspectors accepted that there was much to be said for the principle of parallel forms but maintained that where there are 35 girls in a form the advantages are fewer and the disadvantages greater.

Clearly times are changing. The function of speech training it is said could be widened to include speech making, storytelling or debating and the suggestion is made that elocution exams should be omitted. And there is approval for the history and geography departments making use of excursions and meetings of local learned societies.

Special tribute is paid to the French Mistress. She is described as being a '*French woman of considerable vitality and resourcefulness who has been on the staff since 1919. She has not allowed custom to stale her teaching nor to lower the high standards she has set.*'

Mademoiselle Louise Bartelemy (known to generations simply as 'Mademoiselle') was on the staff at Holt Hill for forty years. It was a great sorrow when at Easter 1959 she gave notice of her desire to retire. The Annals speak of her having given '*loyal service to the school by her noble, unselfish and devoted work. Past and present pupils were anxious to express their appreciation of Mademoiselle's long service to the school. At a Past Pupils' Reunion over 200 of them voiced the sentiments of all and presented their well-loved mistress with a beautiful silver tea set, wishing her many happy years of peaceful, pleasant retirement.*' Bishop Murphy procured 'for her the Papal Medal 'Bene Merenti' and she was the first woman in the diocese to whom it was awarded.

The Education Act 1967

Following the General Election of 1964 came a reorganisation of the educational system which aimed at discontinuing the practice of allocating children to schools of different types on the basis of ability. 'Comprehensive' education necessitated great reorganisation of existing resources, especially for denominational bodies. This is not the place for a detailed study of the Local and Diocesan policies in Birkenhead; suffice it to say that eventually Holt Hill amalgamated with Heathley High School to form Marian High School.

It was considered that this amalgamation would have the value of preserving Holt Hill's Grammar School tradition for the Catholics of Birkenhead and of giving Heathley High Comprehensive (formerly St Winefride's Secondary Modern) the necessary help to get off the ground as a Comprehensive School. This seemed more in line with what was happening in the County area where the basis of the great majority of Comprehensive Schools was the former non-Catholic Grammar Schools. This was not a popular decision but it was an attempt to strengthen the Diocesan system.

The leaving of Holt Hill

During the course of 1981 the Shrewsbury Diocesan Schools Commission negotiated with the Wirral Borough Council for the purchase of the Noctorum High School for Girls. It was a comparatively recent establishment with three distinct buildings for Lower School, Middle School and Sixth Form. Marian High School was still working on two sites. Negotiations were completed in April 1982 and when the LEA had carried out extensive repairs and re-decoration the Lower School moved from the former St Winefride's / Heathley High / school buildings to Noctorum after the Easter Holidays. It was decided to leave Middle School (4th and 5th years) and Upper School (Form VI) undisturbed in the former Holt Hill convent premises until after all examinations had been completed in July.

This meant that the Holt Hill premises leased by the Society to the diocese would be no longer required by the Marian High School and so would return to the FCJ Society. The exodus began on 5th July and by 16th July the school had been cleared. There was very little

left in the building apart from the Chapel furnishings. The School asked to take some of the things from the Chapel so as to keep the FCJ and Holt Hill traditions linked with Marian High School. The remaining articles in the Chapel, including stained glass windows all found good homes in Wirral churches¹¹⁴ where former pupils reside.

The Sisters were grateful that Wirral Planning Authority recognised that although the building was a local landmark it would not be reasonable to expect its preservation. It was decided that the area could best be served by housing development within its own boundary walls. The Authority immediately placed a tree preservation order on the property so that any development would have to be imaginative in order to avoid the trees.

On 8th September the keys were handed over to a demolition firm and the work commenced. But so well were the different buildings constructed and with such good materials that the work of demolition took much longer than anticipated.

Thus in one sense the work of the FCJs in Birkenhead had come to an end. The link with the past through work in the Marian High School and St Laurence's School continued for a time; now it remains in a living presence in St Joseph's Parish. A community had been formed once again in St Joseph's Parish, at 14, Heathbank Road in 1977. In 1999, four Sisters live there full time: Sisters Catherine Bibby, Helen Costigan, Veronica Hayes and Mary Joseph Pemberton. They serve in a variety of ways in hospitals and hospice, in parishes and in Upton Hall School.

Upton Hall Convent School

Upton was fully inspected in February 1920 and then again in October 1930 but the total numbers still remained comparable; the point of interest being that the day scholars now outnumbered boarders.

114 The large crucifix which had hung outside the Sacristy door and was associated with the name of Miss Beechey was taken to St Joseph's Church, Birkenhead to keep alive the connection between Church and Convent; stained glass windows went to St Paul's Ford Estate; the Stations of the Cross, presented by Old Girls, went to Our Lady's Ellesmere Port; Chapel benches to St Alban's Wallasey and large statues of Sacred Heart and Little Flower (from Red Corridor) to St Paul's, Church, Ashton-under-Lyne

	<u>1925-26</u>	<u>1926-27</u>	<u>1927-28</u>	<u>1928-29</u>	<u>1929-30</u>
Boarders	34	27	33	30	28
Day Scholars	27	24	28	26	35
Total	61	51	61	56	63

At the next Inspection (1951) the opening remarks of the Report point out that since 1930 the school 'has grown to such an extent that it is difficult to think of it as the same.' There had been 'steady and continuous growth over 20 years. The School has absorbed its new members gradually without losing the family spirit which was characteristic of its earlier days.' This period of expansion was presided over by M. Gerard Coppinger who succeeded M. Philomena Hartigan as Head in 1932. It is to her 'energetic and determined leadership' that the HMIs attribute the remarkable growth of the school.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Boarders</u>	<u>Day Girls</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Aged 16+</u>
1930	28	31	59	6
1951	54	321	375	58

Inevitably this gratifying numerical development led to serious problems of accommodation in an eighteenth-century family home to which no substantial addition had been made since 1863. Overcrowding was obvious; the Library, described as 'ample and attractive' in 1930 is being used for Music so its availability as a Library is limited; the Art Room built in 1901 and praised in 1930 for being well lit, had been subdivided and is now too small; the laboratory was small and there was no room for Crafts, House-Craft and Needlework. But, as the Community Annalist wrote: 'we were thankful to have our lovely new cloakroom to display and Upton Manor to refer to.' The former had been built in 1950, the latter bought in 1951.

The Noviciate area, built c. 1903, had been taken over by the School in 1927; when the Boarding accommodation was transferred to the Manor in 1951 dormitories were freed for school use. In 1954 the resident priest moved to the new presbytery in Moreton Road and the

VI Form moved into 'St Joseph's.' In 1959 the Junior School moved to the Manor¹¹⁵ and the VI Form vacated the old priest's house.

All this activity meant that by the time of the next General Inspection in 1963, under the Headship of M. Cecilia Gillow, although the Library was now thought of very much as a Study for the boarders, the Art Room had been restored, there were better facilities for Music and Needlework and an extra lab. But educational practice had moved on and the Inspectors were looking for specialist rooms.

The Assembly Hall was built in 1966. The Boarding School closed in 1972 freeing more space for classrooms and tutor rooms. In 1974 pre-fabs situated in the old Rose Garden housed Domestic Science and in 1980 a Business Studies Room was built. In 1983 some of the Community moved out to a house in Manor Drive, freeing up more accommodation for school use.

Successive Inspectors had commended the school grounds ('attractive and healthy surroundings') with their tennis courts and hockey field, but gymnastic provision was sparse. (In 1951 'the Head Inspector suggested lashing ropes round trees so that the dear children might climb around when they felt inclined. The signs of horror on the Head Mistress' face made the proposal fall flat.' [Upton Annals]) The Sports Hall was built in 1987 -and the third substantial addition, The Lingdale Building, to house IT and Science is due for completion in 1999.

Change of Status

The original Lingdale was a small school, staffed for the most part by French Sisters, founded at the request of the Vicar Apostolic for the education of young ladies. Reading the Life of Frances Gibson it seems idyllic: French window and doors opening on to woodland

¹¹⁵ The Manor remained the site of the Preparatory department until 1984. It was an old house, difficult to maintain and unsuitable for further adaptation as a school. Sister Mary Joseph Pemberton was due to retire. She had moved to the Manor in 1966 when St Joseph's Primary School moved from the Convent grounds. Her time there brought her years of service to Catholic education in the area to forty-one! The Manor was a happy place, and parents paid tribute to the 'devotion, academic ability and happy atmosphere generated by Sister Mary Joseph and her staff.' Before Sr Mary Jo, Mother Agnes Russell had served as Head and over the years Cecilia Connolly, Christine Hayes, Madeleine Hayes, Cuthbert (Frances) Heaton and Maureen Hothersall had taught in the school.

and lawns, 'Hide and Seek' in the shrubberies, bird -nesting and nutting in the woods, the whole fragrant with the scent of the pine trees.

Although initially things at Upton were very much the same, events taking place outside the world of independent schools could not be ignored. We have seen how the curriculum developed, how public examinations became part of the academic round. Evolution was gradual; there was organic growth and continuity. Gradually Upton was being caught up in the nation-wide education debate. Head mistresses, Sisters Mary Agnes Long (1967 -70); Mary Condron (1970-73) and Miriam Maher (1973-83) felt the winds of change.

From the mid-1950s, Upton was in receipt of 11+ places awarded each year by Cheshire Council to Catholic girls living in Bebington and Deeside areas. When Wirral LEA came into being with the formation of Merseyside in the mid-1970s, these places continued. In 1980 Upton became part of the Assisted Places Scheme, founded by Central Government. The aim was to enable parents on a low income, to have a choice in the education of their children. Upton offered 30 Assisted Places each year to girls aged 11 -13 years, who achieved the required standard in the Entrance Examination with the result that between 1983 -1995 the fees for 70% of the pupils attending Upton Hall were paid by public money, money coming from Wirral LEA and Central Government.

Then came the 1988 Education Act with the introduction of National Curriculum, Local Management of Schools (LMS), statutory information for Parents, increased powers and responsibilities for Governors, In-service Training for Teachers. And the creation of a new Grant Maintained Status.

With the introduction of LMS in the late 1980s Wirral LEA paid a reduced fee to Upton and St Anselm's College for 11+ pupils which meant a cumulative shortfall in the finances of both schools. The Wallasey MP, Ms Linda Chalker, was made aware of the particular difficulties that both schools faced and she recommended a direct approach be made by both schools, through the Chairs of Governors and the Head teachers, to Kenneth Clarke, Secretary of State for Education. In time, the 1993 Education Act made it possible for Independent Schools to apply for GMS, subject to very specific criteria.

After years of devoted service as Chair of Governors Mr A.I. Denye retired in October 1994 and was succeeded by Mr I. Heery. But before that change took place, the Governors had voted unanimously, in March 1994, to take the necessary steps to make application for Grant Aided Status for the school.

To Sister Loretta Madigan (1983-1997) and Mr Heery fell the task of gathering data and negotiating the obstacles until in July 1995, the Secretary of State was pleased to grant Upton Hall and St Anselm's GM Status, effective from September 1st.

Although there were financial advantages, it was not primarily finance which dictated the decision. In the wake of 100% public funding, fees were no longer charged; there was access to Upton for all Catholic girls in the area; Upton was indeed

'at the service of Catholic Education in the Wirral'.

And when GMS was abolished, the choice for Upton to become Voluntary Aided was a possibility, a possibility enthusiastically accepted,

First Lay Headmistress

The Society of Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus retain the Trusteeship of Upton Hall School but with the retirement of Sister Loretta, the unbroken line of FCJ Headmistresses came to an end. The Governors appointed Mrs Patricia Young and it has been under her leadership that the School celebrated the 150 the Anniversary of its founding.



Dee House



St Werburgh's
Chester:
Window
erected
in memory of
M. Elizabeth
Austin in 1912.
Dee House and
St Werburgh's
School in the
Background



Upton Hall



Upton Manor



Holt Hill: Sacred Heart grotto

Chester Cathedral: Kneelers designed as part of the celebration for the 900th Anniversary in 1992.

The idea was to depict the life of the Christian Churches, schools, etc. in the life of the County



Upton: A Group of Pupils with Canon Dallow, Chaplain 1885-1917



Upton Hall School showing entrance to the chapel from the rose garden



Upton Hall School showing entrance
to the chapel from the rose garden



Miss Rose Scott 1897



From Upton's production
of the Mikado 1897



Pupils who became FCJs
Mary Frances Gibson (Lingdale),
Florence Jones (Upton, 1891)



Early Upton Graduates. This photograph is inscribed 'To dearest Mother (Xavier Preston) from your devoted children Winifred and Mary 1899'



Nonie and Claude Bacon to whose memory one of the stained glass windows in Upton Chapel is dedicated



1938: Diocesan Rally of the Children of Mary. The procession of thousands, which stretched for 314 of a mile, formed in Holt Hill grounds before processing down Whetstone Lane to the Savoy Cinema in Argyle Street, the only place big enough for the meeting.



GTC Upton Section led by Birkenhead Park by Miss Gray (Captain, centre), 'Pop' Marchand and her sister Minnie, who later taught at The Manor.



(Sometime in the 1930s) - Corpus Christi at Holt Hill with Provost Hazlehurst.



Holt Hill May 1950: The Crowning of Our Lady



Holt Hill 1935: 'The Bohemian Girl'



Holt Hill 1938: 'Pandora's Box'



Upton 1983:
'The King and I'
Anna: Agnes
McParland,
the King,
Mr Reg Triplett.
Backcloth painted
by Miss Mavis
Blackburn.



Upton Hall 1943: 'Pride and Prejudice'



Upton Hall:
1898: Annie Connolly (left) and T. Kelly
1999: Concert Performers



Holt Upton 1902: Tennis
Pauline (left) and Sabine O'Meara

Upton 1958: Netball team





1998: Extended FCJ links.
Upton Hall v Genazzano
College FCJ (Australia)

September 1951: Miss Gray and
Upton Form VI on the Campania
(the Festival of Britain ship that
visited Liverpool)



1951: M. Gerard Coppinger (Centre)
M. Imelda Hannon (Left) and Sister
Alphonsus Kerrigan watching the blessing
of the Docesan Travelling Mission

Sr Monica Bird, her sister Annie and
Sister Camilla Mills (pre-1954)





1959. The retirement of Mlle Louise Jeanne Bartälemy. All these members of staff with her, were also past pupils. Mrs Hamilton, Mrs Maddocks, Mademoiselle, Mrs Diggle, Mrs Litten, Mrs Cleary, Miss Curtis, Miss Buchanan, Mrs Morton

Upton: Lay Staff 1953 (Left to Right): Back Row: Miss Conron, Miss Moran, Miss Rose, Mr Waters, Miss Barber, Miss Lucas, Miss Blackburn, Miss Marchand Front Row: Miss Walton, Miss Morgan, Mrs Ryan, Miss Grey, Miss Graham, Mrs Egan, Miss Roxburg



Late 1960s: Sister Mary Agnes Long sets out with a group of Upton girls to 'demonstrate' for Shelter.



1965: Holt Hill:
Past Pupils' Association Committee



1965: Holt Hill: Past Pupils' Reunion Benediction

Holt Hill Autumn Fair (1960s)
Sr. Mary Clare Holland



Community 1949

Back Row: Cajetan Hand, Hilda MacDonald, Anthony Clancy, Albertine Donworth, M. Gerard Coppingher, Mary Rose Lee, Imelda Hannon, Stanislaus Parkinson, Clare O'Donnell, Teresa Lafferty.
Front Row: Alphonsine Kirwan, Cecilia Roche, Camilla Mills (with Billy the dog), (behind Camilla, perhaps, Columba Bresnan) Gertrude Wilson, Mary Jo Pemberton, Winifred (Borgia) Horner.



Community c 1968

Back Row: Columba Bresnan, Gerard Hayes, Pauline Farrell, Christine Hayes, Patricia McKeown, Breda Bresnihan, Veronica Hayes, Madeline Hayes.
Front taken straight across: Monica Dundon, Benedict Ryan, Albertine Donworth, Alphonsine Kirwan, Cecilia Roche, Alphonsus Kerrigan, Mary of the Cross Smedley, Camilla Mills, Josephine Daly, Teresa Lafferty, Hilda MacDonald





Holt Hill Upper VI July 1975



October 1998: Year 8 visited sites in France associated with the Foundress. Jenna Davenport (centre) and Abigail Atkinson sign the Visitors' Book in Rue Dupuis, Amiens, the first house of the Society.



September 8th 1999: Official Opening of the Lingdale Building: HRH the Princess Royal with Mrs Young and Mr Heery in the reconstructed dormitory.



Left to right: Bernadette McKenna (Head Girl); Mr Heery (Chair of Governors); Mrs Young (Headmistress); Sister Paula Terroni fcJ (General superior); Natalie Black and Sarah Prothero (Deputy Head Girls)

Royal Jubilees and Deaths

Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee 1887

It was ‘on the advice of competent persons’ that they did their best at Dee House to celebrate Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee. They decorated the two carriage entrances; over each there was an imperial crown surrounded by ground ivy, on one the inscription “God Save The Queen”, and on the other “Long To Reign Over Us”. The letters were white scattered with gold stars. The National flag flew over the house. The children from St Werburgh’s School joined in the procession to the Town Hall and stopped off at the Convent on the way back to sing ‘God Save the Queen’ followed by ‘vivats for the Queen and the inhabitants of the Convent.’

Increasing integration

To celebrate the Jubilee ‘de notre bonne Reine’ all the convents in the country had been invited to make clothing for the poor as their offering to the Queen. The community at Upton sent ‘several dozen pieces.

The celebration of Royal Occasions provides an opportunity to note the growing integration of the Convent communities not only into the national life but also into their neighbourhoods. It is not simply the change from French in the 1887 reports to English in 1897. By 1897 there is not the same awareness of the need to make sure the neighbours know the Convent is marking the Jubilee.

At Upton in 1887

‘our little village celebrated worthily this happy event and we united with all our heart in the universal joy. Before any of our neighbours was up, our organ sounded out the national anthem: God Save the Queen to which, from a neighbouring room different musical instruments replied playing a spirited rendering of the patriotic hymn. This is how we woke the

inhabitants of the village for we had taken the precaution of opening the windows so that everyone might witness this loyal demonstration. At 8.30 a.m. our chaplain sang the Mass and many distinguished protestants from round about joined us. The service finished with the Te Deum. Notices giving the events of the day had been posted around and we were most amused to learn that our Mass and Te Deum had appeared on them. Our children had a right royal holiday: dinner and tea in the garden. In the afternoon they gathered in a place in the garden from which they could watch the village children, led by the priest and minister, walking in procession to strains of 'God Save the Queen' and 'Rule Britannia' played by the band of a Liverpool Institution. This band came to Upton at the request of our Chaplain, and, as it added one of the principal charms to the rejoicings of the festivity, the Protestants showed themselves most amiable towards the Catholics to whom they owed it. All difference of religion seemed to be forgotten in these circumstances.... Everyone in the village wore medals struck in honour of the Jubilee and each of our children wore a red rose in honour of Her Majesty which seemed to give great pleasure to our Protestant neighbours.

Diamond Jubilee 1897

By 1897 the account is written in English and the 'reveille call' was 'God save the Queen' on two pianos. There is no longer any reference to the neighbours and the day seems to have been remarkable for the meals.

Grand breakfast followed by Benediction, after which we all stood up in Chapel to sing 'God save the Queen' to words specially written for the occasion. A typical Englishman's lunch came off at 11 a.m.; ices in the garden at 11.30; fête-day dinner at 4.30; then all went to see the village

children at sports in an adjoining field The day closed with a good supper and endeavours to see some distant fireworks in Liverpool...

At Chester once again ‘art and labour combined rendered our undertaking a great success. The elegant tri-colour arch erected over our carriage entrance was, we were told, a topic of praise and admiration in the city.’ The Community worked hard on the day itself, catering for the Elementary School children’s tea-party the Corporation liberally paying expenses. At the request of the Manager the funds for St Werburgh’s had been entrusted to the nuns and no difficulty had been raised.

The party followed celebrations organised by Mr Kynnersley HMI. There was choral service in the Cathedral, then in the Market Place under a gorgeous display of banners and bunting a song of Jubilee and the distribution of medals by the Mayor. The appearance of the St Werburgh’s children was much admired. The girls wore white dresses with alternately blue and red sashes. It is recorded that when ‘the Protestant Bishop of Chester’ saw the boys’ tricoloured favours he said, ‘These I am sure are the work of the ladies of the convent.’

At Holt Hill the children had a grand holiday; we hoisted the Union Jack and all along our large house the words: God bless our noble Queen’ were inscribed in red, white and blue letters a yard deep. After dusk, coloured lamps represented ‘V.R.’ in the front of the house below the monogram of the Holy Name.

Our Venerable and Gracious Queen

Three years later the in April 1900 Congregationists from Upton had the honour of seeing our Venerable and Gracious Queen at the Railway Station at Chester... The general display of loyalty was too much for the aged and venerable ‘Mother of the Nation’ for she bowed her thanks and waved her hand-kerchief while tears of emotion fell from her eyes.

The death of Queen Victoria

Queen Victoria died at Osborne in the evening of January 22nd 1901 and the Birkenhead News pointed out that all the RC Churches of the town mourned and paid tribute '*in sympathy with all their fellow countrymen.*' Fr Fisher at Our Lady's, Price Street spoke of '*the feelings of friendliness which she had manifested towards Catholics during the outburst of adverse feeling which followed the establishment of the Catholic Hierarchy in England.*'

By 1907 'The spacious Times of Great Victoria' had become history. At Upton there was a magic lantern show to illustrate *a subject of great interest to the children since they were studying that period of history.*

...of whatever religion or denomination

In 1910 when all England was plunged into mourning for the death of the King, and bells sounded,

'not in joyful peals but in accents of deep felt sorrow... we joined in prayer with the Catholics and Clergy of England for the eternal welfare of the deceased sovereign, so revered and loved by all over whom he ruled, of whatever religion or denomination they might be... On the 15th, a Circular bearing the signature of the Duchess of Norfolk invited us to subjoin our name to those of the other Roman Catholic Religious Communities in England, in a letter of sympathy to be presented by the Duchess to our bereaved Queen.'

World Wars

South African War.

Reference has already been made to the War in South Africa and to Nellie Bacon's gift of two windows to Upton Chapel in memory of her children and husband. Perhaps inspired by this, the pupils gave a concert, that same year, to raise money for the 'Widows and Orphans War Fund.' At St Laurence's Masses were offered at the request of the children, many of whom had relatives in the army. A Capuchin Father supplied at Upton for a while and visited the school at West Kirby. He had served as Chaplain in the Boer War and had much to relate.

World War I

World War I was much nearer home. August 2nd 1914 was doubly significant for the Sisters. On that day M. Philomena Higgins was elected General Superior and in the words of the Chester Annalist 'before the sun had set on that day of days rumours of war, the clash of arms, the signal for a mighty attack on the part of a powerful enemy and the still more powerful resistance on the part of allied forces, brought to a deadly stand-still the arts of peace, and plunged Europe into disasters of which, as yet, we cannot see the end.'

The end could not be seen, but it could be prayed for. The Chester pupils made a pilgrimage to Holywell 'for the safety of our country and the speedy victorious peace to end this disastrous war.' At Upton the Annual Retreat had as its theme: War comes from the want of love of God. At St Laurence's one girl organised eight others to promise to go to Holy Communion for nine days to pray for peace—she went to see each one every afternoon to remind her.'

Everywhere there was mourning for loved ones. The Sisters were aware of FCJs in Belgium and France and in London where bombs were falling. Everywhere there is constant reference to many relatives killed, wounded or taken prisoner; each sad piece of news leads to a re-doubling of prayer. In 1916 alone 7 boys, past pupils of St Joseph's Elementary School, were killed.

Entertainments were no longer matters of advertisement. At Holt Hill in 1914 as requests for donations to various relief funds poured in, the Town Hall was taken and the children revived songs and dances and prepared two plays, 'The Jacobite' and 'The Iron Jane.' At Chester too, the Girls and Infants 'time after time' were called on for concerts and entertainments, some for wounded soldiers, some to raise money for soldiers, widows and orphans and Belgian refugees. (As early as 1914 between 40 and 50 Belgian refugees had reached The Towers, Birkenhead. They arrived on a dismal rainy evening and the Holt Hill pupils went out nonetheless to wave Belgian flags as the wagonnettes passed!) In 1916 52 wounded soldiers accepted an invitation to tea at Holt Hill and were entertained to a concert as well. The Annual Outing and Prizes were both sacrificed so that the money might go to the soldiers.

The Preps at Holt Hill sent parcels of 'good things' to the Birkenhead Bantams and received a letter of thanks from the Lieutenant Colonel; several sections of the School adopted prisoners in Germany to whom they sent fortnightly parcels and on occasion received letters and post cards.

At Upton, Arrow Hall was lent by the owner to serve as a convalescent home for invalid soldiers. The girls visited them there. At the Workhouse Infirmary the Sisters found 'pitiful examples of crippled manhood... faces riddled with shrapnel, not even the remains of arms.'

In Chester, the pupils at Dee House and St Werburgh's knitted caps, socks and mitts.

A popular visitor was Fr Joseph Kelly, Secretary to Bishops Allen and Singleton. His father had served in the Cheshire Militia and he volunteered as Army Chaplain in 1915. He came to say goodbye and visited Upton and Holt Hill on every leave 'facing a barrage of 101 questions.' He was serving in Salonica when M. Victoire Duckett died.

There was difficulty in obtaining Retreat priests. In 1914 an exiled Belgian Jesuit spoke in French and the community listened to his thrilling accounts of his experiences during the siege of Antwerp. By 1915 he spoke in English.

Upton had some unusual reminders of war. Four pupils who had left in July 1914 intending to go to a Convent in Germany to perfect their German found themselves back at Upton. A lecture on 'Belgian Churches and Monasteries' drew 'general sympathy for the nation to which they belonged' when recently damaged buildings were shown. Canon Moriarty, visiting the Convent, spoke to the girls on the subject of 'Aircraft'; a marked change from his earlier talk on 'Surnames.'

At Chester they knew the scare of a potential zeppelin raid. In the night of 27/28 November 1916 a phone call warned them of the possibility. All were awoken and 'in perfect silence and perfect darkness' they went down to the lower part of the house. It was a false alarm.

In the Spring of 1917 there was a spell of very cold weather. Coal and coke were luxuries and even if carters could have been found on the domestic front in Birkenhead, no horse would have been able to negotiate the steep hill after which Holt Hill was named. Other schools had closed but at the convent Sisters carried coke from greenhouses and laundry to the main furnace. When closure seemed inevitable, the thaw came. The most serious sufferers were said to be the beautiful palms! At the same time one of the Birkenhead mains burst so there was no water for long periods during the day and all during the night. The discomforts were 'borne bravely and without a grumble' as part of the war effort.

Overcoming the food 'shortage'

Food was becoming increasingly scarce. At Upton pigs and rabbits were introduced and at Holt Hill the Community decided to grow their own potatoes, since they had become 'a rare and almost extinct luxury!' Oral tradition told them that it couldn't be done; an earlier experiment had resulted in all tops and no tubers but '*nothing daunted the young and daring spirits of the establishment determined to try.*' Young nuns started the work of digging up the lawn and were soon joined by boarders and day pupils alike. '*Digging became the rage; every minute that could be spared from lessons was spent in the garden.*' Conversations in the Community became so technical that older members said they were weary of the very words

POTATO, TRENCHING, FIRST EARLIES, MAIN CROP etc. Books were consulted and there was general agreement that richly manured soil was an essential prerequisite. Holt Hill's cows were a thing of the past; as with coke and coal, there were no carters available; the only thing was DIY. '*...the amateur gardeners suddenly evinced a great zeal for long country walks, from which they returned tired but triumphant, with very heavy, bulging bags the odorous nature of the contents of which forbade travelling in a tram!*' Then, in answer to prayer, St Joseph took over and John, a Navy man, (discharged as unfit because of his cough) turned up, looking for work. In an incredibly short time he had everything under control, the sowing and planting done and then the potatoes making their appearance. John also showed himself adept at handling five little pigs which made their appearance in sties built for them and the sisters began to fear lest the cough which had secured John's dismissal from the Navy might be judged cured and he himself whisked away from them! The following year we read that 'our potatoes compared favourably with any in the neighbourhood, tomatoes were plentiful and good; and our other crops prospered in spite of an extra supply of caterpillars'.

1918

No bells pealed at the beginning of 1918, no hooters sounded on the River. Prayer was redoubled; elementary schools on the Wirral were asked to make a set of baby clothes each to be given to some soldier's wife in need of them. There was a display of all the layettes created and St Joseph's School's contribution was judged to be the best. An oak shield with the fact recorded in letters of gold was presented to the School.

Armistice Day when it came was welcomed with breathless expectation. At Holt Hill the children went into school as usual but when 11 o'clock struck the first sound of whistles, horns and buzzers gave the signal that Peace had come at last. '*Then it was goodbye to books for the day! The children clapped and waved flags till they were tired and then went off home to enjoy themselves. The boarders walked off their energy by going to the sea 'Chester' did honour to the occasion according to its immemorial wont... with a symphony of joy-bells.*

St Laurence's Girls were less fortunate. There had been a serious outbreak of influenza which had closed the school from October 9th to November 21st. 'We therefore had no Armistice Day.' Nonetheless in 1919 'The Peace Collection for Poor Children' raised £55.10.0 from the Girls Department alone and the older girls were shown round the Battleship HMS Birkenhead. Lt Commander Collingwood Hughes gave them a graphic description of the Zeebrugge action in which the two Mersey ferryboats, The Iris and The Daffodil² had played a gallant part.'

'The Year One of the Peace Era began happily at Holt Hill.' They were able to acquire the Officers' hut from the gun station in Mersey Park and it was erected on the site of the former fowl yard.

The Spanish Civil War

Mrs Hannay³, a great friend to both the Convent and the Elementary School at Upton, lived at 'Greenbank', at the top of Saughall Massie Lane, opposite the door of the Priest's House. Basque children were billeted with her and Upton girls took mattresses and so on across to help.

World War II-local preparations

As early as October 1936 at a Meeting of the Managers of St Joseph's Elementary School, correspondence with the LEA was read to the effect that St Joseph's School had been designated by the Committee as a suitable first aid centre in case of Air Raids.

In February 1939 the Managers noted that so far no provision had been made for the children of St Joseph's in the case of Air Raids. They had been fitted for 'respirators' but these had not yet been distributed. Furthermore they were aware that no room at St Joseph's could be made gas proof without great expense and the Managers did not know whether the children of Upton would be evacuated in case of war.

² These two boats returned to peace time service as the ROYAL Iris and the ROYAL Daffodil

³ Mr Thomas Hannay was a cotton broker.

That summer the Community at Upton worked hard to ensure that the Hall and Convent could be 'blacked out' and on September 1st their first evacuees arrived in the persons of two Sisters of Notre Dame and six elderly FCJs from the Hollies, Manchester. Since the SNDs had a school of children with them there was question of Sunday Mass and to accommodate the regular parishioners as well as the evacuees it was decided that on September 3rd Mass would be celebrated in the garden at 10 o'clock. Mass was no sooner over than the rain came down and at 11 a.m. the declaration of war.

Evacuation

All the Birkenhead schools were to be evacuated but those children who lived in reception or neutral areas were not eligible. Since Upton was opening on schedule the Head was besieged from every part of Wirral by parents seeking places for their daughters. Seventy Holt Hill girls transferred and the school sent cart-loads of desks and chairs as well as a number of teachers. When school opened there were 250 pupils and a long waiting list. The 'war guests' were in varied uniforms⁴ and another sign of the times was that since 250 were obliged to make do with cloakroom space for 50, classes could be found sitting in their Macs with umbrellas by the side of desks! It was not only lack of facilities that necessitated this departure from 'Upton Order' but the fact that such girls could get away through a side-door at the going home bell, no mean consideration when buses came only every 40 minutes because of petrol rationing.

At Holt Hill in 1943 they philosophised that '*though the harvest is great desks and cloakrooms are inadequate.*' In that same year, Upton re-opened with '*tremendous numbers. Eventually everyone found some kind of a desk to sit at, and some kind of a chair to sit on and carry round to sit on in the next place and what is more wonderful still at Upton, everyone managed to hang her coat and hat on something, often on somebody else's peg, and work began in great spirit... '*

4 Coupons for clothing and shortages were going to mean acceptance of a variety of shades of green in the Upton uniform itself.

Others noticed that whereas before the war the HMI had looked unfavourably on cramped conditions, now it was a question of how many more could be squeezed into limited space. St Laurence's Girls had 'visitors' on the top floor who used the rooms belonging to the Senior Girls whose own presence on the same floor as the Juniors placed restrictions on the Juniors' recreative activities.

September 1st 1939, of course, had seen about 110 Holt Hill girls assembled in the gym, each carrying a rucksack and gas mask. At 9.30, final instructions having been given, the long procession of children and mistresses 'accompanied by a tall policeman' set out for Park Station. From there they travelled by non-stop steam train to Hawarden where they were met by boy scouts, girl guides and the village policeman -and a loud speaker shouting instructions. The party walked down the country lane to the village school where reception officers were waiting, allotting each child to a hostess and issuing a bag of rations to last 48 hours. The three FCJs were billeted in the Poor Clare Convent with some of the smaller preparatory school children. As at Upton arrangements had to be made for Mass and Mother Abbess got permission from the Bishop for the Holt Hill party to go into the enclosure.

Initially classes were held in two large rooms in the Convent but eventually the more senior Holt Hill girls joined other evacuees at the large County school nearby, leaving Juniors and 11 year olds behind. The evacuees were from Maris Stella, Wallasey, Wallasey HS for Girls, Wallasey HS for Boys, Oldershaw GS for Girls and Oldershaw GS for Boys. Hawarden GS sacrificed several of their classrooms and the evacuees were taught to best advantage in mixed school groups.

Former evacuees remember how 'a club was started with something different each night. Monday night it was recorders (which we made from pieces of bamboo). This class was taken by Mr Harold Drake from Wallasey. Another night it was games, on another quiet games like chess, but Friday night was always the Debate. After the club we were shepherded home in groups to the various localities by members of the different staffs.'⁵

5 W. Litten: Memories. Mrs Litten also gave to the FCJ Archives a collection of Holt Hill memorabilia and the Minute Book of the Past Pupils Association.

Nonetheless Holt Hill kept up its traditional 8th December procession which wended its way round the Convent. 'We sang *Oui je le crois* and *Tota Pulchra* to a very wheezy harmonium'.⁶

Whilst they were at Hawarden a novice was clothed. All the VI Formers were invited and the Oldershaw and Holt Hill girls accepted.

At Christmas, since it was the time of the 'phoney war', the evacuees returned home and Holt Hill re-opened in January, girls from Hawarden and Upton re-united.

When the war 'proper' came there was a second evacuation to Barmouth in December 1940.

Air Raid Shelters

In Birkenhead the Director of Education had himself been to see what accommodation there was in case of air raids. 'While touring the house, he found many places, which, with some help from the Committee, could be made into perfect shelters. He remarked on the strength and solidity of our walls and pronounced our house to be the strongest and best-built in the town. Next day, workmen arrived to board up windows and to build a blast-preventative in front of the door. Soon we possessed secure air raid shelters for the whole school.'

Meanwhile at Upton, St Anthony's passage was serving as a dormitory / shelter. Mattresses were laid on carpets on the floor; all available camp beds were called into use. This was still not enough so bunks were made and the 'young boarders slept in twos, one above, one below, taking three nights up and three nights down with great punctiliousness.... To all who remember Board of Education inspections and the visits of Lady Inspectors to dormitories to measure the heights and lengths and breadths of the beds, it will be interesting to know that early in the term, when a Board of Education Inspector asked to see our war-time sleeping arrangements for boarders and was shown St Anthony's packed to capacity

6 ibid.

with emergency beds of all shapes and sizes, he considered our provision excellent and had only one regret, that we ‘could not fit the rest of the school in.’

The gas masks at Upton were fitted in St Mary’s Church Hall.

M. Gerard Coppinger was an ARP Warden.

St Joseph’s Community Service.

By June 1939 the Elementary School Managers noted that Birkenhead Council had built an air raid shelter for St Joseph’s School in the convent grounds. It was designed to hold 140 children.

The trench air raid shelter, with cement walls and floor was square in shape; it had electric light, seats and ‘eight camp lavatories.’ Speculation was abroad as to whether it could be used for growing mushrooms after the war!

St Joseph’s itself was a potential rest centre in case of severe air-raids. The council had undertaken the ‘blacking out’ of the school, installed a boiler and sent in stores of food and supplies of blankets. Luckily all was in place because on July 31st 1941 150 bombed out people arrived. Many had lost everything in the raids on Birkenhead. A meal was sent in for them by the Authorities and the Sisters⁷ allocated places on the floors of the school giving each person a blanket for the night. They were just settled when the sirens went and they all had to troop down the garden to the air raid shelter till the All Clear went at 3.45 a.m. The next morning some went off to work; the rest were served a hot breakfast. It was more than a fortnight before all found billets and the School could re-open for lessons.

St Joseph’s was not only an emergency rest centre. It was also an emergency feeding centre and one of the places chosen by Birkenhead as a depository for iron rations and there was a formidable collection of tinned foods stored in the Convent for this purpose.

The siren for the district was secured to the School building and by the end of 1940 it had given ‘290 dismal warnings’. Mary Zoe Frances, of course, was not to be rung again, unless it were authorised to announce parachute or other invading troops.

⁷ The Sisters were responsible for the homeless at St Joseph’s; two of the secular mistresses had volunteered to help in the billeting.

Air Raids in Birkenhead

The air-raids were of course, much more intense in Birkenhead. From July 1940 onwards there was a continual barrage. In December they were in the basement shelter at Holt Hill from 7 p.m. till 6 a.m. for four consecutive nights. The Sisters prayed fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary, then the Dolours, the Litany of Our Lady, the Litany of the Sacred Heart and the Joys and Sorrows of St Joseph and whilst 'houses and shops in the vicinity have been demolished, Holt Hill towers high above the river, its roof outlined against the sky on moonlight nights'.

The night of December 21st an incendiary bomb fell on the house. Two airmen on guard nearby saw 'the house lit up magnificently.' Luckily the bomb had fallen on the one spot open to the sky, 'the little yard outside St Aloysius' garden'. That same night three other bombs fell in the garden—two were duds and one burnt itself out.

The previous night at Upton the blast from a land mine at Bidston had shattered some of the Study windows and the windows on the main staircase; in the Study the statue of the Sacred Heart had been thrown from its pedestal. In March, the big front door was wrenched open and again many windows were broken but it all paled into insignificance when it was realised that many of the children were now homeless and that in Birkenhead alone there were more than 1,000 killed or wounded.⁸

Worse was yet to come for Birkenhead, culminating in the night of May 2nd 1941. Again a couple of incendiaries fell comparatively harmlessly at Holt Hill and they suffered no more than broken glass.

Before breakfast next morning twelve FCJs from Bellerive were seeking shelter because of an unexploded land-mine dangerously near to their house but found no more peace in Birkenhead than they would have done across the Mersey.⁹ Another nerve-racking night was followed by the 'most terrible explosion' whilst the Community were waiting for Mass, explosions resulting from the blowing up of two ammunition ships on the river.

⁸ It was in the raid of March 12th that Canon Tallon and his housekeeper were killed.

⁹ Fourteen from Bellerive arrived in Upton at the same time.

The evacuation of the Holt Hill Community

There was no Community retreat at Holt Hill in 1941. M. Philomena Higgins, General Superior, decided that a quieter scene would be truly more conducive to prayer. Nine went to Preston, three to Sedgley, three to Eshton and fifteen to Upton. In due course they all returned to Holt Hill, to prepare for the re-opening of school.

Already there had been some dispersion of the community but a greater was looming. A metaphorical bomb was about to fall. On Friday, September 12th, they were told that once more they were to disperse, this time, as it turned out, for ever. Elderly, infirm and any not directly concerned with the school were to go to Sedgley, the school people to Upton. It is easy to imagine their feelings as they knelt together 'for the last time in our beautiful spacious chapel'.

At Upton, the decision 'at once expanded our accommodation'. As for the girls in 1939, cloakroom facilities were very limited, but more important matters like beds were all ready for the nineteen who arrived on Saturday, September 13th.

The Holt Hill Community remained just that; it never lost its identity though living with the Upton Community at Upton. When one of those who had gone elsewhere died, 'Holt Hill Annals' (written from Upton!) always spoke of them as belonging to Holt Hill.

M. Victoire O'Brien, for example, who had taught at St Laurence's since 1932, taking particular charge of the older girls in their last year of school life, had returned with the evacuees from West Felton at Christmas 1939, clearly unwell. She never recovered her strength after surgery, went to Poles 'for a complete change and rest' but the illness reappeared and she died August 1940.

Sister Winefride McAllinden had for years been portress at Holt Hill and looked after the secular mistresses' lunch and rooms. She died at Sedgley, August 1943. Two years later, there is first a note of disbelief that M. Beatrice Robinson 'whom we had known to be so strong and vigorous when she left us, was now dangerously ill'. Mother Beatrice so long Headmistress at Holt Hill died at Gumley, May 3rd 1945.

The Sisters went back and forth between Upton and Birkenhead on the buses, soon establishing a rapport with the bus drivers. Each morning they caught the 8 o'clock bus from the Village, taking with them a billy-can of tea for the driver. No wonder the bus never went without them!

M. Augustine Brennan found the travelling wearisome and in September 1945 she gave up her teaching but died in November. She had been at Holt Hill since 1918 and spent over 25 years in the Kindergarten. In addition she had travelled out to West Kirby every Sunday to work with the 5-10 year olds.

From the time of the evacuation to the amalgamation with Heathley High School, occasional celebrations of Mass at Holt Hill were always a great joy as in February 1943 when they had 'two Masses in our Holt Hill Chapel—so long lonely and deserted!' The celebrants were brothers of one of the Sisters, the younger one just ordained.

The Balloon

The two airmen mentioned earlier were with the famous balloon. In February 1940 Flight Commander Reid arrived at Holt Hill with news that a barrage balloon was to be sited on the hockey field. On April 13th '*all day long, immense motor lorries, laden with tents, beds, baggage, cylinders for gas and all the apparatus for a balloon barrage kept passing through our garden.*' It wasn't long before a very satisfactory *modus vivendi* was in operation, to the advantage of everyone. The Sisters provided use of hot water, a bathroom, and a mess room with crockery and so on (including accommodation for visiting wives); the airmen in their free time marked out tennis courts, put up nets, mowed the lawn, filled sandbags and so on! To a household whose gardener had been called up, they were clearly a great blessing. Later another group blacked out the chapel's many high windows.

The balloon hadn't been up long when it broke from its moorings, missed the topmost roof by a miracle and floated down Wilmer Road, causing great consternation but doing little damage. The following year the cable of another balloon, released by a great storm, fell across the chapel roof, while Holt Hill's 'own' balloon was ripped open.

'Exercises' Upton had their own excitements when a mock invasion was staged in September 1942 and parties of soldiers spent the day prowling round the grounds. Later it was announced that Upton was the only location on the Wirral not taken by the 'Enemy'.

Throughout the war, Upton appeared 'a great and interesting incendiary possibility' with the result that the National Fire Service, the Home Guard and other branches of the Civil Defence would come asking to be shown the danger spots! The wooden staircases and 'fire-provoking attics' drew particular attention but it was not until air-raids in the North West seemed things of the past (1944) that a group came to

'set us problems as to how to act in various alarming and hypothetical predicament. They sent us in piles of helmets and eye screens and hundreds of petrol tanks for static water while two large reservoirs of static water were set up in the grounds. Finally they staged two most realistic exercises. There was a central control and fire-watchers organised in squads and equipped with helmets, stirrup pumps, buckets and eye shades. Then the bombs fell hypothetically and the squads operated while umpires observed. Later the umpires gave their criticism as that one squad protected itself from high explosives behind a lath and plaster wall; another messenger arrived at control to ask for reinforcements before the fire had broken out...'

Nonetheless they won praise for their level of keenness and competence.

HMS Exeter¹⁰

As in World War I links with the Services were vibrant. The girls at Upton wrote to the sailors on the training ship St George. Holt Hill adopted HMS Exeter and in 1940 received from Captain, later Rear Admiral Sir Henry Harwood the gift of a beautifully illuminated album containing more than 50 photos of the ports at which they had called along

10 The story of HMS Exeter is graphically told in 'The Drama of Graf Spee and the Battle of the Plate:A Documentary Anthology: 1914 -1964' complied by Sir Eugene Millington-Drake K.C.M.G. (1964)

the coast of South America. Among them was a very touching one showing the Exeter taking on board those who had been rendered homeless by the earthquake in Chile. There was also one of the captain and crew who played so magnificent a part in the fight against the 'Graf Spee.' At that time, they had sent a telegram of congratulation and received an appreciative letter from the Captain. Later the surgeon sent the Head Girl a hat band with the name of the Exeter printed in gold letters. When the ship docked in Plymouth some of the crew came to present a large piece of shrapnel which had fallen from the German ship. It was mounted on polished oak and bore a plaque engraved with the words 'HMS Exeter'.

As the war went on, books, papers, magazines, cigarettes were sent to the ship. Groups formed in the classes to hear Mass and say the Rosary daily. It was a great occasion whenever letters were received from the crew.

One young rating on the Exeter was an Upton boy who had last served on the altar when he was home on leave. When the Exeter was lost in 1942, he too was mourned as lost at sea but later it was realized that he was a Prisoner of War in Japanese hands. At Holt Hill the 'gallant little ship' was mourned and the loss was vividly brought home when a letter arrived, after its loss, from the Senior Officer thanking for the gifts, both spiritual and temporal.

HMS Argonaut

The shock and grief over the loss of the Exeter was still being felt, when it was announced that there was another ship ready for adoption. The Anglican Chaplain from HMS. Argonaut visited the school and expressed his pleasure at being there and his appreciation of the books, papers, games already collected. He encouraged the girls to continue sending Catholic literature since there were around thirty Catholics among the crew. The girls sang 'Land of Hope and Glory' and other patriotic songs, on which he congratulated them.

O.R.P. Piorum

St Joseph's Elementary School had adopted a Polish destroyer, O.R.P. Piorum which had been the first ship to sight the Bismarck and exchange shots

with her. The boys especially were keen correspondents and the Poles sent them their rations of chocolate in return. On one occasion a member of the crew sent bananas and lemons which were duly raffled for war funds. In 1943 the ship was responsible for six enemy sweepers off the coast of Jersey. By return for the wired congratulations, the children received from the Commander a letter and a picture of the ship which thenceforth hung in a conspicuous position in school. In January 1945 the Polish Destroyer docked in Birkenhead and the Ship's Doctor and a Lieutenant Commander made their way to Upton to invite teachers and 25 children to visit the vessel. 'School Red Tape was abandoned on the instant, and the lucky chosen ones hurried home to wash, dress and return in time for the chartered bus which was to take them to their adopted ship. Polish hospitality was lavished on all. The children were given coffee, cakes, chocolate and fruit; the teachers rare cosmetics and the bus driver bacon and eggs. Different members of the crew claimed their personal correspondents and introduced them to the mechanism of a destroyer. The girls were not as nimble as the boys, consequently some of them fell down ladders, their sailor chaperons anxiously enquiring 'Are you fit?' It was a day to live in their memories.'

The Anglo-Polish relationship was marked too by lectures. One was given to the girls at Holt Hill in 1943 by a Polish Officer who gave a synopsis of the country's history and showed a series of slides depicting views, of the country. It may well have been the same man who spoke to the children at St Joseph's in 1944 about Polish Catholic life and customs.

French troops

After the Fall of France, 700 French soldiers and 400 Senegalese were stationed at Arrowe Camp. Some of them came to Upton for twice weekly English lessons. Many of them were priests including two White Fathers, chaplains to the Senegalese troops. These two the Sisters were able to put in touch with the British Provincial and two Christian Brothers were put in touch with their house at Market Drayton.

The plight of these men who 'had nothing, not even a change of socks' elicited 'English hospitality and sympathy in French.' The Convent also supplied hosts and wine for the Masses in the camp. On the 27th July 1940

the French Dominican Naval Chaplain said Requiem Mass in the camp for those drowned in the Meknes. Everything necessary was borrowed from Upton, including 24 Plain Chant books.

When the soldiers moved off, thousands of French Sailors moved in. Again there was 'networking'; one of them had a sister-in-law a nun in Bristol. Since he could not get leave to visit her, she got permission to travel north and stayed in the Convent.

American connections

In time American soldiers too were stationed in Arrowe Camp. Upton girls sent Thanksgiving Day greetings and were delighted when the Colonel came up the following day to thank. Bars of chocolate and tins of pea-nuts changed hands.

But it was the Elementary School which struck up the most lasting bonds and long after the men had moved away they were still kept up-to-date with letters about ducklings, broody hens, chickens and kittens. At Christmas 1944 just as afternoon school was closing, several boxes of American sweets arrived.

Old Boys

And Old Boys of St Joseph's were not forgotten. The present pupils wrote to them regularly. In 1943 one who was being taken to Italy as a Prisoner of War was drowned when an Italian ship was sunk. Three were in the 8th Army and another became an Instructor in the Air Force and served in Alberta, Canada.

School in Holiday Time

Part of the Schools' War Effort was remaining open during holiday time. In 1940 Holt Hill kept school open from 9-12.30 each day. The weather was good so most of the time was spent in the garden playing games; the older girls gave at least an hour a day making and mending clothes for refugees.

Similarly at St Joseph's there was half-day school for the five weeks of the summer holidays in 1940, with staff taking two weeks holiday in turn. From September onward school started at 10 a.m. and during the autumn term there was one week's holiday in September and one week in November. In 1942 the promised six weeks dwindled to two and preceding these was a 'Holiday at Home Week' when the children came to school and enjoyed themselves in the Convent garden when weather permitted and had table games in school when it did not. The following year, St Joseph's and Overchurch schools were grouped together and the teachers did duty by rota, one from each school for each week. The scheme fell through; for the first week there were two teachers for four pupils, the second, two for two. The Education Committee closed all Birkenhead schools on the Thursday morning of the second week!

Collections

The schemes for helping on the War Effort were numerous and creative. Silver paper for the Duke of Gloucester's Red Cross Fund, garments for the Liverpool Red Cross and the W.V.S., balaclavas for soldiers. At Holt Hill Fr Waring, from the Apostleship of the Sea, brought a big box full of mittens which he asked the Community to undo so that they might re-knit the wool as socks. They also made dressing gowns, blankets and bandages.

In 1940 at a Holt Hill bazaar they raffled a puppy, a kitten and three budgerigars. There was, too, a surprise raffle of 'tea and sugar.' Because of blackout the bazaar was held from 11-3 p.m. Nonetheless it made £75. The 'Catholic Women's League Mobile Canteen Fund' benefited from the Christmas Play 'Tons of Money.'

At St Joseph's the drive was to provide 'joysticks' for Spitfires; Upton collected for the 'Empire Tobacco Fund' and in 1942 raffled a box of matches. In 1943 holiday competitions were the order of the day and four small girls of ten and eleven organised a raffle in aid of the Polish POW fund. 'With the help of their parents they collected 2 lbs of sugar, a large bar of soap and a string bag.' They then went from house to house selling raffle tickets. In this way they collected £4.1.8.

As the War continued it seemed impossible that items could still be found. Needlework classes did pieces of fancy work, made sachets and so on; Juniors contributed 'mats.' Raffles were popular and Upton's total at the 1941 bazaar was £120 -£40 more than their previous best.

VI Formers at Holt Hill sold flags for hospitals, for the Catholic Seamen's Home, for the Apostleship of the Sea; at Upton they collected dried leaves for the Cheshire Herb Company and sent off sacks of hips and horse-chestnuts -all for medical purposes. Shades of the botany classes of long ago!

There was a Fuel Saving Poster Competition and another for Allotments; there was

. Warship Week, War Weapon Week, Wings for Victory Week, Salute the Soldier Week. There were collections for the Hospital Fund and for the Catholic Committee for Relief Abroad. This last benefited from Upton's production of 'Pride and Prejudice.' Upton tied with Birkenhead High School as best Secondary School in the area in 1943 when they collected £3,076 and so held the Alderman Short School Savings' Cup for a month and received a certificate of Honour from the Air ministry. St Joseph's having aimed at £300 made the grand sum of £ 1,137 and the Mayor of Birkenhead came to congratulate them. They too held the coveted Silver Cup for a month and were presented with a Certificate of Honour. In the same week, Holt Hill watched their thermometer climb to the £ 1,000 mark for which achievement they also received a certificate signed by the Secretary of State for Air.

Prayer

As constant as references to fund raising in the Annals, are references to prayer: 'earnest prayer that Our Lord might bless our arms and give peace to this warring world.' This was written in 1940 and the Rosary was kept up for days while rumours of disasters and more disasters were heard on all sides. Then came the miracle of Dunkirk, followed by fervent prayers of thanksgiving and a joyful 'Te Deum' at Benediction. There was a National Novena of prayer and penance", July 7-14th. At Upton it was marked by Perpetual Rosary and daily holy hour; at Holt Hill by special acts of silence in the ranks and self-discipline. Frequent visits

from chaplains on active service and from the Senior Naval chaplain kept up interest in work and prayer for the forces.

Mother Josephine Collison, Superior of Upton, on a visit to Liverpool found herself surrounded in the street by a group of women and boys begging for prayers for their relatives at the various fronts and asking for medals to send to them. Since she had none with her she took their names and addresses and on her return to Upton despatched what had been asked for. Letters of thanks, some with postal orders and requests for more prayers followed and almost weekly letters passed between some of the women and Mother Josephine. One mother had six sons in the forces.

G.T.C.

The Girls Training Corps lives yet in the memory of those who joined.

A Franciscan priest gave two lectures on Social Work whilst the troop was in process of being formed and it was hoped that the Training Corps would give the girls 'a sense of their spiritual responsibilities in this topsy-turvy world.' The Franciscan was followed in 1943 by a Jesuit who spoke on 'Character Training' and 'Certain Modern Tendencies' and by Fr Nicholson C.SS.R. on 'Indifferentism' and on 'Marriage.'

Formed in 1942 the joint Holt Hill - Upton Hall Company was soon being inspected by the Area Commandant. She praised their marching, (for which Miss Grey, the popular gym mistress, was responsible) and their appearance. The compliment sounds strange to us now. 'She complimented them on their neat rolls of hair' and said she had never before found a Company missing not a single tie-pin. They were the first Catholic Company on the Wirral and when in 1942 Mother Vicar¹¹ distributed their badges she reminded them of their duties and responsibilities and urged them 'to high endeavour. A Catholic Company must be a first rate company'.

The Cadets were well grounded in basic subjects such as Physical Training; First Aid and Hygiene; in Citizenship, Despatch carrying and fire-fighting. This last culminated in an exercise in the neighbourhood where a hut was set

¹¹ The Office then equates somewhat with that of the present Provincial.

on fire so that they might test their skill in putting out our the fire; bombs too were exploded for their benefit so that they might show their skill in dealing with them. They visited an Auxiliary Territorial Service camp near Wrexham and a gun site where they were allowed to work the predictors and indicators. Six were chosen to take part in a Youth Rally at Bebington and in June 1943 the whole company marched in the Catholic Youth Parade in Birkenhead.

Sixteen of the Holt Hill cadets worked at Birkenhead General Hospital during the Easter Holidays.

After V-E the girls' involvement with the realities of war did not cease. Upton was visited by a corporal who had been blinded by a mine in the North African desert. In addition to losing his sight he had also lost an arm. He described graphically how hopeless he had felt, how the St Dunstan's Nurses had helped him learn Braille and taught him to type with his one hand. He had also been trained as a lecturer and travelled round talking about the work of St Dunstan's.

An Airforce chaplain who had been seriously injured on D-Day and after his recovery seen further service also visited Upton. He brought with him a wonderfully camouflaged parachute whose working he proceeded to demonstrate. It was so big that it filled the Study Hall.

After V-E Day there was a mixture of celebration and on-going training. Home nursing exams; a parade at which the Princess Royal addressed them and took the salute; despatch carrying exercises, gym displays and figure marching; Morse code exercises, presentation of proficiency badges and long service chevrons. There was a Rally at Lady Leverhulme's estate at which the King of the Hellenes cut a large cake containing a present for every cadet: a small book of G.T.C procedure. At Tranmere Rovers ground one of the Holt Hill cadets received the Union Jack from an officer of the A.T.S. and in the march past the salute was taken by the Lord Mayor.

The old order changeth

It is abundantly clear from the Annals and memories that times not only were changing but had already changed. It might be such things as the effect of clothing coupons on uniform leading to a variety of shades of green at Upton but it also went deeper in that the G.T.C. brought together two schools previously fiercely independent one of the other; the involvement of the Sisters in the direct service of the refugees in Upton took the Community there into contact with the local scene as never before, since unlike the Sisters in Birkenhead they had not been involved in community work.

The composition of the Boarding School changed; in 1944 'the children scattered North, South, East and West; one as far North as Forfar, another as far South as Portsmouth', but there were no longer overseas students. 'Holidays at School' no longer meant almost half the boarders remaining through the vacation.

Children of Mary Meetings at St Joseph's were far fewer 'because most of our members are in the Forces.' And of those still at home many devoted two evenings a week to help in the Seamen's Home in Birkenhead. Similarly at Holt Hill, for Christmas 1942 one of the Lower Forms presented a series of tableaux depicting the Gospel scenes, but many of the Senior Girls were unable to attend since they were helping in the Post Office.

Like Holt Hill in World War I, the Upton Gardens were turned into vegetable gardens but not by the Sisters. Mr Squire (the HMI) suggested and Mr Watson Williams (the LEA Inspector) approved that St Joseph's Senior Boys should be allotted weekly time for gardening and by the spring of 1942 they had carrots, parsnips and cabbages coming through. Two years later the Convent entered local life in yet another way when at a local Red Cross Horticultural Show they won seven prizes - three firsts (one for a gigantic cabbage, one for a dish of three apples and three pears, and a third for a dish of six cooking apples), three seconds (a dish of six dessert apples; a dish of six eating apples and a dish of six cooking pears) and a third (for cooking apples.)

Traditions

Nonetheless the old traditions were maintained.

December 8th was celebrated and Children of Mary received their medals as they had done at Lingdale. *Tota Pulchra* and *Oui je le crois* were sung. In May Our Lady was crowned even though at St Laurence's in 1945 'the First Communicants led wearing their white frocks, (owing) to restrictions in material it was impossible to have school uniform, so we had class groups in uniform wearing the frocks made during the year'.

The retreat work which Marie Madeleine had started almost a hundred years previously went on, especially at Holt Hill where the Legion of Mary went for their overnight retreat each year. Catering for 60 women in 1941 was no mean feat but 'careful management and good mends' provided. The numbers were up to 90 the following year but the event brought great joy since the Blessed Sacrament was reserved for the occasion and for the children's retreat, and FCJs again slept in the house¹². The Old Girls Retreat was reduced to 60 since so many past pupils were in the forces but for this retreat too the Blessed Sacrament returned to Holt Hill.

Even though because of the war there could be no night watching, the Altar of Repose for Holy Thursday was still a place of beauty. There were no daffodils left by Holy Week in 1943 but there were red tulips, white narcissi with red lamps twinkling between the flowers.

Corpus Christi processions showed the most marked change since Holt Hill's was held at Upton where the Parish procession took place on the Sunday following the feast, since parishioners could no longer take time on weekdays. On the feast the two Convent Schools processed together following the old traditional route 'round the Rose Garden, up the steps past Our Lady's Grotto and then down the pathway to the rose-covered pergola.' The senior girls wore not white dresses but school uniforms and white veils. On the Sunday it was the turn of St Joseph's School and the parishioners of Upton and Greasby but the Community and boarders processed for a second time!

12 See below on the evacuation of the community from Holt Hill.

November collections for the Holy Souls were given new impetus by deaths of relatives and friends in air raids and on active service. St Patrick's Day continues to be mentioned, the Elocution Master, Mr Parker Lynch, continued to give his usual recital, and harps and roses abounded whilst the traditional green lunch (consisting of pea soup, salads, green jelly and lemonade) was served.

Preparation of those wishing to come into the Church went on as it had done since the early days at St Werburgh's. Some were service men from the camp, others wives and mothers following the example of husbands and children; several were service personnel, men and women, seeking instruction before marrying. There were too others coming back to the practice of their religion.

Examinations, secular and religious continued. Schools now were so much larger that there was more than one examiner—three at Holt Hill in 1944, two at Upton. At Prize Day, the awards at Holt Hill were so numerous, Higher School Certificates, School Certificates, Royal Academy of Music, Religion, that the Provost remarked that there could be no shortage of paper after all! The Prize Day messages were addressed to the girls—be true to your traditions; don't think your days of learning and study are over; always put duty first; and there is a new note: be well instructed in the principles of social justice.

Links amongst the three FCJ Schools on Merseyside were maintained not by sharing Examination centres but through team games, and by visits to one another's plays—'The Immortal Lady' and 'The Gondoliers' at Bellerive, 'Pride and Prejudice' and 'Viceroy Sarah' at Upton. Holt Hill appreciated these productions but given their bombed condition it is hardly surprising that they had no full scale production of their own.

Where History gives way to Memory.

Advice commonly given to those writing Local Histories is ‘start early.... and finish early’.

In referring to the founding of the Society and to the Sisters coming to Liverpool before they came to Lingdale, there was nothing earlier to start with. As for finishing early, it is invidious to name too many names among the living lest inadvertently some be omitted. Nonetheless, there is a place for memories which are part of the flow of time without being officially documented.

Dee House

The memories of those who were among the last pupils of Dee House FCJ were recorded by Sister Winifred Sturton O.S.U. under the heading: ‘Recollections of Dee House in the Early Twenties.’ A School uniform had been introduced around 1920. It consisted of ‘navy blue gym-slips with tussore silk blouses and for concerts or garden parties we had white crepe-de-Chine dresses with smocking. There was a new school badge for hats; it was in bronze with the motto *‘Honi soit qui mal y pense’* in royal blue enamel at its base.’ The beautifully pleated gymslips had to touch the ground when their wearers knelt; hats and gloves were *de rigueur*. (The wearing of hats and the measuring of skirts were restrictions against which Uptonians were rebelling in 1969). ‘Garden parties with strawberry teas were great occasions when parents and friends were invited -and very enjoyable they were.’

After the FCJs had left, the remains of the Roman amphitheatre were literally unearthed. Past Pupils appreciated the City’s wonderful Roman past, (but) the loss of the lovely dreamy garden still saddens those who knew it and loved it in bygone days.’

Holt Hill

Canon Marsden remarked at Chester in 1900 that during an acquaintance with the house which extended over 30 years he had noticed that ‘generation after generation of the same families had succeeded each other’.

The same was true of Holt Hill where children followed mothers, aunts and grandmothers and where sisters would be at school together with numerous cousins.

Remembered Names

Many still speak with appreciation of M. Beatrice Robinson, Headmistress in the 1930s; a very gentle but firm person interested in each child. M. Christina McMahon presided over the Junior Study and taught Religious Knowledge and English Literature. M. Mechtilde Hanning, who is remembered as being ‘a marvellous teacher’, taught French and geography. Secular teachers who stand out in memory include Miss Hayes, who today would be called a Deputy Head, taught Senior English and History; Miss Eccles, whom everyone loved, was an excellent Latin teacher; Mademoiselle; and Miss O’Rourke and Miss Lee the gym teachers.

In 1934 M. Mary Francis Till, M. Beatrice’s niece became superior. We all loved her and were delighted when she started to teach us religion. ‘Mother Magdalen Hartigan was elderly and acted as form mistress to “3 Latin” and taught Religion. Mother Millicent Kingston was a fourth year form teacher and taught English Language and Literature. Later there were Mother Hilda MacDonald and Mother Cecilia Roche. The former who taught mathematics was very musical. The latter became Headmistress of the Preparatory Department. Sister Pauline Farrell taught Domestic Science in Holt Hill for many years before being moved to Upton where she was responsible for the Boarders.

Mother Agnes Mary Stewart, who was thought to be Australian gave music lessons and was very good at wood-carving—lizards and other ‘scaly’ animals. In fact, she had been born in Liverpool in 1859 and sailed with the first band of FCJs to Australia in 1882. *‘The only child of a sea-captain (she) was highly thought of in musical circles. Professor Marshall Hall always recommended his future pupils to her before they came to the Conservatorium...’*

*Professor Thompson of the Conservatorium visited Vaucluse College in 1910 and was greatly impressed by M. M. Agnes... "I think we have here a miniature Conservatorium" he said.'*¹³

The line of Senior Headmistresses, M. Beatrice Robinson, M. Mary Paul Doherty and M. Monica Dundon came to an end with Sister Mary Clare Holland, a woman of principle and vision, who worked so tirelessly for the cause of Catholic education in most difficult times. Hers is a story still to be told.

Sister Marie (Claire) Sykes replaced M. Hilda and her biology teaching is a vibrant memory of those lucky enough to experience it. When Marian High School was formed, Sisters Mary Clare, Marie, Paula Norcross and Paula Terroni¹⁴ were on the staff; Miss Allanson and Mrs Litten became Senior Teachers.

Traditional Songs

For many years, Assembly was held every day but Monday was special since the School song was sung.

Over the busy city strife our Convent School looks down,
Over the river's fret and foam, a beacon to the town.
It soars aloft like lark in sky, above all things mean and base.
The first in all that's true and good, the foremost in the race.

Chorus: So work your hardest when you work,
And play at the time for play.
Stern duty's pathway never, never shirk.
To glory 'tis the way.

Like streams that meet in Southern seas, that flow from far and wide,
Its many pupils gather close from o'er the countryside;
When scattered over many lands, when girlhood days are o'er
The Spirit lives of truth and good 'till life on earth's no more.

O Mother Blest, O guide our way, from dangers be our shield,
'Neath Thy fond mantle lead us safe, Thy glorious arms to wield,
Our school in freedom ever keeps its honour and fair name
Be Thou our guide, our hope, our star to lead us on to fame.

13 Quotations from 'The Sisters FCJ in Australia' Sr M.C. O'Connor 1982.

14 Sister Paula Terroni later became Head of Gumley before being elected General Superior in 1993.

On her Feast Day Reverend Mother went to Assembly and was greeted in song:

All Hail to this bright festal day,
God Bless you Reverend Mother dear,
While we beneath your loving sway
Bring you our greetings most sincere.
O Mother loved, we wish you joy and pray
For many glad returns of this bright day,
A happy feast we wish you Mother
And may God bless your coming year.

Our girlhood days are fleeting fast
Replete with memories so dear of you
As each dear feast-day thus unfolds to us
That love and joy we feel anew.

O Mother we wish you joy today
With grateful hearts we sing our festal lay,
A happy feast we wish you Mother,
And may God bless your coming year.
Ad multos annos vivat!

There was yet another song, this one traditional on the Headmistress's feast day.

Vivat, vivat, vivat Mater bona!
Vivat, vivat, ad multos annos.
List to our festal lay
We sing with joy today,
Our hearts and voice upraise
To wish you happy days,
Vivat, vivat, vivat, vivat Mater Bona.
Vivat, vivat, ad multos annos!

Inter-School Gatherings

One of the great joys was going to Upton and Bellerive for their annual concert, and 'pupils from these schools came to Holt Hill for ours. We knew there was always a great welcome and a lovely tea waiting for us. One year the Children of Mary Sodality made a pilgrimage to Our Venerated Mother's grave at Upton... Again we were served a delicious tea and were able to enjoy it with the

boarders who had gone to Upton when Holt Hill Boarding School was closed'.

Uniform

For the May procession in the early 1930s the girls wore their 'blue summer dresses, white veils and white gloves.' One other interesting detail from this period is the memory of how the girls 'used to fix gas jars from the science room to the canopy and pillars (round the Sacred Heart statue between the netball courts and the kitchen garden) and fill them with lupins.'

Around 1935 a new school uniform was introduced. The navy box-pleated gym tunics and white blouses gave way to brown kilts for the younger children and brown skirts and cream blouses for the older ones. The girls were glad to relinquish the old gym tunics, but people in Birkenhead, apparently, were sorry that the multicoloured hat band was no longer to be seen. It was replaced by an FCJ pin in the shape of a shield.

Marks

Each week a mark for each of the main subjects was recorded in Report Booklets, both for homework and class work. 'At half term these were the marks that determined our standing and were the results that were sent home, whereas at the end of each term the results were on test marks. We always noticed that pupils who worked hard all year got good results on the half term report, whereas those with good memories got the good marks on test results.'¹⁵

The House System generated great competition and enthusiasm not only in the academic and athletics fields but in such competitions as Reading and Public Speaking.

Musical Tradition

There have already been many references to the entertainments musical and otherwise given at Holt Hill over the years. The tradition continued to the end.

15 Joan (Sister Rosalie FCJ) McGrath

In 1969 or 1970 there was an evening programme of ‘Unrehearsed Gilbert and Sullivan’ which included extracts from ‘Trial by Jury’, ‘The Mikado’, ‘HMS Pinafore’ and ‘The Gondoliers’; in 1972, ‘Iolanthe’ with Stephanie Prestage as Phyllis.

Before the school closed there was a production of the ‘Creation’ at which Anne Sherlock, Janet Jaques, Margaret Morton, Stephanie Prestage and Valerie Masterson sang the solo parts—a wonderful climax to a fine tradition.

Past Pupils Association

The Minutes of the Meetings of the Past Pupils Association are vibrant testimony to the loyalty and continued involvement of those who had been pupils at Holt Hill.

The records from 1961 onwards paint a picture of Fairs as fund raisers for various projects: Renovation and Decoration of the School Chapel and Organ (1961, 1963 and 1964)¹⁶, to provide Oral and Visual Aids for the School (1962). In 1966 ‘the chemistry and Physics Departments were very pleased with their part of the proceeds, the Biology Department likewise. The Preps were pleased with their balls, skipping ropes etc.’ In later years there were stage curtains and a portable floodlight (1970), a deep freeze (1971) and the proceeds of the Eleventh Annual Fair (1971) were ‘donated towards a new Biology Lab to be built in what used to be Blessed Imelda’s. The classroom around the corner in the top corridor on the way to the Sodality Chapel’, and finally in 1972 a Library Unit.

There were too ‘non-profit making Social Evenings’ where attractive buffets and plenty of talk about old times were the attractions, or, as the official record puts it: meetings followed by gossip (1971), demonstration of costume jewellery (1966), an enjoyable evening with the English Folk Dance and Song Society (1969, 1971).

In 1975 the annual subscription was abolished and instead there was a proposal to collect for ‘The Fund for the Protection of the Chapel Stained

16 1963: £200 given to Reverend Mother. The organ had needed an extensive overhaul and repair; the bellow was found to be split. It was decided ‘to have done essential repairs and fit an electric motor to improve the tone and ease the wear on weak bellows. This repair was carried out by Messrs. Charles Whitey and Son, organ builders of Chester... At Benediction members were delighted to hear the improvement in the organ.

Glass Windows.' The Autumn

Fair that year was a huge success despite inclement weather. A few days previously '*vandals (had) smashed some of (the) virtually irreplaceable windows with either stones or air rifle pellets.*' Flannagans, Metal Workers of Aintree undertook the work and the Past Pupils set to work holding 'Coffee Mornings, Social Evenings or some such' in aid of the fund.

Annual Retreats on Mid-Lent Sunday continued until 1966, with the Minutes showing whether the priest was '*not too strict about talking*' or '*frowned on conversation*'. In 1966 the First Annual Requiem Mass '*for deceased nuns, past pupils and staff*' was celebrated and such was the liturgical atmosphere of the times that it is recorded that '*those present who intended going to Communion placed their own host in the ciborium at the back of the chapel. This was later carried up to the altar.*'

At the Annual Requiem in 1969 it took only fifteen minutes for the new fibre-glass Stations of the Cross to find sponsors as many families wished to donate a Station as memorial to their parents.

A Mayoral Year

1973 was special in that it was the year of Alderman Miss Eileen M. Keegan's mayoralty. She was one of the past pupils active in public life and the Mass asking a blessing on the work of all the public bodies was held on May 20th in St Joseph's church.

Presentations

The gratitude of the past pupils towards those who had played a part in their education shines through the report of the various meetings and reunions.

In 1965 Mrs Gibbons was presented with a cheque; in 1968 Mrs Maddocks with luggage but the departure of Sister Monica Dundon after 16 years as Head Mistress (1951-1967) was a great event.

In School the chapel, corridor and refectory were all decorated with roses by nuns, girls and Past Pupils. Mrs Diggle and her Art pupils carried chairs and counted places to ensure that there were sufficient. Sr Cecilia and her helpers put the tables in the required places, laid cloths

and china; Mrs Hamilton, with assistance, prepared the food. In addition to gifts from the school staff and pupils, the Past Pupils had made themselves responsible, among other marks of affection and esteem, for a prize, to be known as the 'Sister Monica Prize' which would be given '*in perpetuity to the pupil or pupils each year who were most helpful and unselfish.*'

According to the Report '*tears came to many eyes and there were lumps in many throats. The regret was that there were not a tape recording made of the speech...*' Sister Monica took as her topic 'The Holt Hill Spirit'. No recording having been made it is impossible to quote at any length. But the report says that she remarked that the '*Spirit is something fine, something splendid and intangible which she found when she arrived and which she hoped would always continue.*'

In 1968 when Sister Cecilia Roche, who had followed Mother Augustine Brennan as Head of the Junior Department, retired after 32 years at Holt Hill she was presented with £32, a token '£1 for each year of devoted service.' In 1970 Sister Hilda¹⁷ retired and was given a suitcase to travel with and money to be spent in Lourdes.

Holt Hill / Marian Association

In 1976 the usual reunion was not held. As the Minutes observe, 'under the circumstances it seems inappropriate.' Instead an open Meeting was held to discuss the merger with Heathley High School and to decide whether or not the Association was to continue and if so under what title. The decision was that the Holt Hill / Marian Association (formerly Holt Hill Convent FCJ PPA) would be set up and the proceeds of the Autumn Fair that year would go towards the cost of a mini-bus for the new Marian High School for Girls.

Upton

The memories stirred by the name 'Upton' are very varied.

On one level past pupils and members of staff use phrases such as 'a tradition

¹⁷ Sister Hilda MacDonald had spent long years at Holt Hill, first as a pupil and then on the staff.

to be proud of', 'gracious hospitality', 'a sense of belonging.' On another level they remember their chapel mantillas, and blue Cloaks for December 8th; the red, yellow and blue of their Sodality ribbons; the sashes for the four Houses -Saints John, Joseph, Paul and Thomas; harps and roses, green lunch for St Patrick's Day and Mr Parker Lynch's Irish Recitals.

On yet another level they speak of hens and cows, guinea fowl at the top of Rosary Walk and rabbits where the Sports Hall now stands.

Sr Monica Bird was in charge of the farm yard at the turn of the century; she 'wore blue glasses, kept a lot of hens with her blue apron always on her in the garden'¹⁸, and she gave 'a big glass of lovely fresh milk' to the little Catherine Quigley (later Sr Catherine) who had come fasting to Mass and fainted. Sr Monica must have been one of the last of a long line who presented 'cows, bees, poultry etc. to receive each a special blessing' on Rogation Days (1886)¹⁹.

Mrs Patricia MacNicholas²⁰ née Sheppard, now in her nineties, went to Upton at the age of 7, and remembers the black pinafores which the little ones wore, the hoops they played with and the see-saw they enjoyed, not least because it gave a view into the cemetery! On the Study Hall floor in those days was a flat board; long poles stood in grooves and you did exercises with the poles 14 times a day for deportment... swinging them out from the front and round to the back until they touched.²¹ She remembers, too, Mother Xavier Preston²² and Sister Ursula Durick²³ who presided in

18 Mrs Fleming.

19 M.F. Gibson recorded in her 'day book' for April 28th 1900: 'Cow exchanged through O'Neil'.

20 Mrs MacNicholas' great-grandmother remembered seeing Eugene de Bonnault d'Houët coming on horseback to visit his mother in Paris. She is the grandniece of Mother Lucy Fletcher who like her six sisters was educated at Gumley House and Paris before becoming one of the FCJs who went to Oughterarde, Co. Galway in 1843. She died in Middlesbrough 1874.

21 Mrs MacNicholas' memories were recalled in conversation.

22 Mother Xavier Preston died at Poles 11. 111953, at the age of 95. She spent almost thirty years at Upton before going to Gumley as superior in 1918. The 'Fisher Bill' was then under discussion and she saw that Secondary Day Schools were an absolute necessity if Catholics were to continue to play an active part in the National Programme. Through her efforts what was then St Mary's College was recognised and accepted as the Grammar School for girls of the area. In 1923 M. Xavier became the first superior of Poles. She is described as having many natural gifts including a lovely voice and a gift of humour.

23 Sister Ursula Durick was one of the many lay-sisters who made possible the smooth running of the various schools. M.F. Gibson often remarked on her devoted-

the dispensary. Sister Ursula apparently had two jars, one of iodine, one of glycerine, and two brushes. Anyone with a cold was required 'to say AH! and Sister brushed your throat with each!' Down the years there were a whole host of lay Sisters whose memory is alive and warm: Sister Cajetan Hand who had charge of the boiler room and was always prepared to let a child into it to get warm; Sister Theresa Lafferty who took to the changes in the church after Vatican II with the remark: No thought now of the Garden of the Soul; I'm holding onto what I can catch of the rigging of the Boat opener'. Sister Theresa had been 'right hand man' to M. Gerard Copinger when a play was afoot and whatever was needed from a fireplace to a witch's cauldron she would produce from her store of treasures in the cellar. Humour, keen intelligence, prodigious memory, a capacity for prolonged hard work and a great spirit of prayer, these are some of the memories Sister Theresa has left behind. Then there was Sister Alphonsus Kerrigan who was portress and looked after the parlours, Sister Alphonsine Kerwan; Sister Aloysius (later Pat) McKeown remembered for her smile and her cooking and the much loved Camilla Mills who died May 12th 1997 at the age of 98. Such was the affection in which Camilla was held that when news of her death reached Upton, Staff and pupils dedicated a Notice Board to her life and work and chapel was suitable decorated with an altar cloth bearing the words:

SR. CAMILLA FAITHFUL COMPANION

Two names which span the years and figure in the history of both Upton and Holt Hill are those of Mother Magdalen Hartigan and Mother Mary Paul Doherty. Mother Magdalen²⁴, who is remembered as having a great fund of 'horsy stories and gypsy tales', was in charge of the dormitory when Patricia Sheppard was at school and as we have seen she later became part of the Holt Hill community. She spent most of her religious life at Upton where she

ness to hard work and praised her great charity to others. It was in the performance of an act of kindness that she lost an eye. As she passed through the yard at Upton one day, she noticed some Sisters busy whitewashing in the laundry. Being herself free at the moment, she offered to help. As a result of not knowing that the bucket contained quicklime, she was shockingly burnt and one eye had to be removed. Sister Ursula died at Middlesbrough 6.10.1928

²⁴ M. Magdalen Hartigan was born in Patrickswell Co. Limerick 26.10.1864; entered in Liverpool in 1884; made her vows at Ste Anne in 1887; died at Upton 23.2.1955. She arrived Holt Hill from Laurel Hill, Limerick, 31.8.1926; taught Maths and English in Secondary School; Sunday School at West Kirby

taught Science and Mathematics. Mother Magdalen was regarded as a fine teacher and to the end of her life she was the resource person for Biology and Botany specialists who appealed to her for the names and characteristics of unfamiliar flowers, trees and so on. She never let anyone down -if she did not know the answer she would leave no stone unturned until she had found it.

Mother Mary Paul Doherty was a novice in Mrs MacNicholas' time, and the novices helped in the laundry but more importantly from the small child's point of view there were feather beds in those days and the novices made nests in them for the little girls!

Herself a past pupil of Upton, Mother Mary Paul had studied at Sedgley before returning to Upton in 1913 to enter the novitiate. After profession she gained an English honours Degree at the University of London before returning to Sedgley as lecturer. In 1941 she came back to Upton and whenever her name is mentioned now-a-days, it is followed by glowing tributes to her wonderful lessons in English Literature, the joy it was to walk with her round the garden enjoying her conversation and her guided visits to the cemetery.²⁵

More recently, Sisters Catherine Bibby, Breda (Assumption) Bresnihan, (who was at Upton for 25 years and like others before her taught also at Holt Hill), Bernadette Coughlin, Katherine Curtin, Ethna Dempsey, Albertine Donworth, Jane Galvin, Marguerite Goddard and Joan McGeough have all played their part in sustaining the traditions of Upton. Sister Pauline Farrell, after teaching needlework at Holt Hill 1942-1958, moved to Upton where she taught and ran the Boarding School until she became Superior of the Community in 1970.

Marian Year 1954

With its long Marian tradition²⁶ 1954 was a special year at Upton. The Sodalists in addition to the ordinary weekly meetings had bi-weekly meditations on Our Lady under the guidance of Reverend Mother; the Pope's Marian Year Prayer was recited daily in chapel by the whole school; each

25 She died at Hartlepool, 5.3.1968. For one to whom reading and walking had meant so much it was a double blow that towards the end of her life she was almost blind and, after a fall, she struggled to walk with a frame.

26 In 1999 the first item on the programme for the 150th Anniversary Concerts was Dolly Bramley's Magnificat with the combined orchestras and choirs.

class worked conscientiously at practices selected by the form mistresses. In addition each form had a project which culminated in an end of year Exhibition. The five Junior Forms concentrated on the Rosary, on Feasts of Our Lady and on the Life of Our Lady; the Senior School dealt with Friends of Our Lady, Shrines of Our Lady, Titles of Our Lady, Our Lady in Prose and Verse, Devotions in honour of Our Lady, Our Lady in Art, Our Lady in Scripture and Tradition, and Our Lady in the World Today.

Each month a subject was set for the Art classes and the best work was framed and displayed for some days. Some of the pieces so rewarded presented Mary as Cause of our joy; Star of the Sea, Help of Christians and Our Lady of the Wayside.

In addition there were Marian Pilgrimages. The Juniors went to Bala; the Middle School in two coaches to Farnleyhalgh and then to Our Lady of the Crag, Knaresborough, whilst the Seniors went to York and visited the shrine of Our Lady of York in the beautiful Church of St Wilfrid.

Vocation

A Manuscript, undated but clearly pre-1932 since it speaks of the Holt Hill Boarding School as still open, points to the fact that from its beginning there have been many vocations both to the Society FCJ and to other Congregations. Sisters Victoire (Patsy) Finlay, Carmel (Veronica) Hamilton and Rosalie (Joan) McGrath are three present day Faithful Companions who look to Holt Hill as their Alma Mater, whilst Margaret Crank and Helen (Eileen) Costigan do the same to Upton. In the Carmelite Monastery at Birkenhead are four with links with the Merseyside FCJs—two with Upton, one with Holt Hill and one with Bellerive, and another Old Uptonian is in the Poor Clare Monastery in Darlington.

These ‘enclosed Uptonians’ belong to the generation that knew Mother Gerard and Mother Mary Paul ‘and others too of course,’ and pay tribute to their wonderful example of dedication and prayer. Sister Barbara Fishwick, who taught at Holt Hill, speaks of the education she received at Upton in terms which would delight the heart of Marie Madeleine:

the aim was a thorough and complete education of the whole person with God as the mainspring... the intellectual side was not forgotten, progress had to be made, examinations passed, but we were never pressurised beyond our capacity, and the nuns always available and approachable for help—sometimes very firm but we knew always it was for the best—in our own interests. Throughout there was cultivated a respect for each other as well as the Staff, and a reverence for those dedicated to God, as well as the ‘things of God’.

Sister Mary Francis (Jean) Pullen OSC as a seven-year old, found at Upton a perfect continuity with her life at home: discipline, good manners and the importance of prayer, as well as in the lessons themselves. Discipline was never oppressive, the girls felt themselves trusted and although ‘Age Quod Agis’ was not often quoted, it seemed to undergird our activities.

Parents had an admiration for M. Gerard who

seemed to have a grasp of all that went on in the school and of every significant detail about each of the pupils... there was an overall wholeness about life... what strikes me most as I look back is the easy relationship with teachers, both religious and lay. We could share our enthusiasms and they shared theirs. Culturally too there was a cohesion I am particularly grateful to M. M. Paul for teaching us to align literature and history in the widest sense. All through school literature was an inspiration... poetry learned by heart, is with me still.

But not every vocation is to religious life and three other examples show the diversity of calling heard by those who passed through the Schools.

Beatrice Gadsby-Suffragette

Beatrice's family home was 'Rainhill Mount' at Rainhill, Lancashire. She was born in 1878, the third of six daughters born to 'Edward Paget Gadsby and his wife Winifred, née Walmsley, a member of the old English Pre-Reformation

Catholic family of that name.²⁷ Mrs Gadsby is described by Beatrice as ‘a gentle and loveable woman, who was also endowed with a strong will.’ This last had been proved early in her life when having been sent to school in Roehampton she was terribly homesick, ran away and found her way back to Lancashire! Her determination won the day and she was sent to Lingdale House. Her six daughters in their turn all went to Upton, with the younger ones allowed to have their desks next to the older ones in the Study Hall. Beatrice says she ‘enjoyed every minute of (her) nine and a half years in the convent but Fedora was rather restless.’

Beatrice was said to have inherited their father’s brilliant brain, he had been a Junior Wrangler at Cambridge with a special flair for Mathematics²⁸, but she also had her mother’s determination.

In 1907 she and Fedora joined the Women’s Social and Political Union, the Suffragettes, led by Mrs Pankhurst. They devoted much time and energy to the Union’s various activities, arranging meetings at street corners, selling the paper ‘Votes for Women’, walking in processions and in Poster Parades. These latter were particularly effective as an advertising medium. Eight or ten women, dressed in their best clothes, donned sandwich boards over their shoulders, calling attention to some grievance. They walked in the gutter down the main streets of London, strictly escorted by the police, and obliged by them to keep at a distance of fifty feet from each other.

One year in particular stood out in Beatrice’s mind. ‘In 1910 there were two General Elections and together we took and ran Committee rooms and arranged meetings to oppose the Liberal Government. We had a rough time! In March 1911, at Mrs Pankhurst’s request, the Catholic Women’s Suffrage Society was formed... Both Fedora and I owe a great debt of

27 Beatrice Gadsby contributing to a biography of her sister ‘Mother Fedora Gadsby, Religious of the Cenacle 1884 -1971’ Her maternal grandmother’s home was Springfield House, Eccleston; a house with a chapel dating to penal times though then used as a picture gallery. In 1908 the house passed into the hands of Bishop Whiteside of Liverpool and became a Carmelite convent. The chapel returned to its original purpose.

28 Her uncle William Rippon Gadsby (1844 -1924) was a member of the Royal Society of British Artists. Influenced by Millais, he was known for his domestic subjects and studies of children. He painted a miniature picture for Queen Mary’s Dolls’ House in Windsor in 1922.

gratitude to the Suffrage movement for all we learned of real life with its sacrifices, which we could not have learned in any other way, and which has proved absolutely invaluable to us.'

Fedora joined the Religious of the Cenacle, and, in time, Mother Gadsby became one of their great Provincials. She died in 1971 at the age of 87 but Beatrice lived on well into her 90s. Sister Anne Marie Ryan fcJ, whose mother had been a school friend of Beatrice at Upton, loved to visit her. 'She had a keen, lively mind and an incisive, confident way of speaking. She was well read, had a multitude of interests and a great head for finance and business. She was a very imposing woman even at that great age, with a fine complexion and lovely, silky white hair—which she never washed, as her mother had told her it would destroy the natural oils! How I wish I had some other conversations on tape!'

Edel Quinn

In 1994 Edel Quinn, former pupil of Upton Hall Convent, was proclaimed Venerable by Pope John Paul II. Previously there has been a unanimous vote by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints affirming her 'outstanding holiness.'

Born in Cork in 1907, Edel, described by her biographer as 'a very pretty girl with huge blue sparkling eye,' came to Upton to complete her secondary education. It is not surprising that one who was destined to join the Legion of Mary as one of its early pioneers should be remembered by her teachers as 'particularly marked in her enthusiasm to promote fervour in Our Lady's Sodality'²⁹ and Mother Philomena Hartigan's testimony to the Cause paints a picture of what 'Age Quod Agis' might mean in the living out: 'a highly principled girl, faithful to duty, unfailingly reliable, conscientious to the highest degree, sensitively charitable in word and act, and kind almost to a fault.'

Her school days were cut short in October 1923 by family circumstances, but the Community at Upton followed with their prayer, her after-office hours work among the poor and needy in and around Dublin, amongst the prostitutes and for little children in the city crèches.

²⁹ Her progress through the various degrees is clearly charted in the Sodality Register.

Having joined the Legion of Mary she went to Mombassa in 1936 and then on to Nairobi where she founded branches of the movement. 'Her wider wanderings took her through the towns and villages, the jungle paths and swamps of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Nyasaland and to the island of Mauritius far out in the Indian Ocean.... Praesidia, to the number of many hundreds, and Curiae sprang up and prospered.'³⁰

Life was hard for her since she was not strong. By the time she was 34, she was said to resemble a woman almost twice her age. She died on May 12th 1944. To the Community, her mother wrote: We are broken hearted after her, as she was one of the best girls that ever lived and I had lived in hope of seeing her after the war....'

Beryl Hollingsworth (aka Berlie Doherty)

The Upton tradition of choral singing and musicals goes back to the arrival of Miss Ford, known for much longer as Mrs McGoldrick. Under M. Gerard drama had been strong but there was no choir. Beryl Hollingsworth was a member of Veronica McGoldrick's first choir and when a setting of the carol 'O Holy Night' arranged for solo soprano and choir was found, the choir mistress 'knew just the right girl to sing the solo—Beryl. Although she was stunned when I asked her, she sang beautifully and I was very proud of her. So began a tradition which has continued to this very day.'

But it is as the author of some 35 novels, mostly for children but, including to date, two for adult ones, radio, stage and TV plays for all ages and twice winner of the prestigious Carnegie Medal.

In the 1999 'Book of Memories', Berlie's page is headed 'The Wearing of the Green' the title not just of that article but of a book of short stories in which one of the central characters goes to a Convent school wearing a green uniform—hence the title of the lead story. Large grounds, landscaped gardens, hockey fields and tennis courts, cemetery and glen wood pigeons cooing, St Anthony's passage with its green tiles, chapel with its stained glass

windows – Uptonians of all generations can follow ‘Julie’ around and those of a certain time knew ‘Mother Agnes’³¹ as Head with her office by Chapel.

For Berlie, the inspiration behind her literary success was Mrs Martin. Another teacher she picks out was Miss Plowden as past pupils from earlier years remember Miss Graham, Miss Gray and ‘Pop’ Marchand.

Age quod Agis

Three women, three very varied paths and yet all three Uptonians witnessing, as do thousands of others, to the empowerment and encouragement given to girls throughout the school’s history, to be true to themselves and to develop according to their talents.

³¹ M. Agnes Long was at Upton for eleven years, three of them as Head. (1959 -1970)

Envoi

The Introduction to this collection claimed that there are many constants, 1849-1999, despite the changes. Each reader will know what has been of particular appeal; each one will know her or his hope for the next 150 years.

For each of us, may the development of Marie Madeleine's missionary project in the Wirral continue to offer encouragement in a world of change and serve as a reminder that openness to change, co-operation, collaboration, are prerequisites for growth.

INDEX

FCJ names in italics

- Allanson, Mrs: 127
Allen Samuel W., Fourth Bishop of Shrewsbury: 23. 35. 37. 39. 48. 49. 50. 52. 53. 77. 103
Austin, M. Elizabeth: 40
Bacon family: 44-45. 102
Bardelemy, Louise (Mademoiselle) 91. 126
Beechey, Miss: 43. 93
Bellerive: 81. 85. 86. 111. 124. 128. 136
Bibby, Catherine: 93. 135
Bilsborrow Mr: 42
Bird, Monica: 133
Birkenhead: 1. 4-5. 6. 11. 12-16. 17. 26. 36. 47. 57. 70-71. 79. 81. 83. 87. 90. 92. 93. 103. 104. 107. 109. 110. 111. 116. 118. 121. 122. 129. 136
Birkenhead Advertiser: 4. 46
Birkenhead, Hampden St: 13
Birkenhead, Hamilton Square: 13
Birkenhead News: 46. 51. 101
Birkenhead, Oak Street: 15
Birkenhead, Our Lady's: 9. 47. 101
Birkenhead, St Joseph's: 36. 47. 57. 93. 131
Birkenhead, St Laurence's: 15. 25. 29. 30. 32. 37. 38. 58. 60. 62. 64. 70. 93. 102. 106. 108. 112. 123
Birkenhead, St Werburgh's: 4. 15. 30. 37. 38. 44. 81
Birkenhead YWCA: 7
Brennan, Augustine: 113
Bresnihan, Assumption (Breda): 135
Brewer John, Auxiliary Bishop of Shrewsbury: 44
Brown G.H., Vicar Apostolic and First Bishop of Liverpool: 1. 9
Brown, James, First Bishop of Shrewsbury: 4. 5. 7. 9. 12. 13. 16. 17. 19. 20. 23. 34. 42. 49. 83
Buquet, Rev. Eugene: 20
Carberry, Canon: 17. 18
Carrol, M Clare: 64
Carroll John, Third Bishop of Shrewsbury: 37. 54
Chester: 8. 13. 16-21. 28. 30. 33. 65. 79. 80. 85. 102. 104. 105.
Chester: Dee House: 18. 19. 20. 22. 24. 25. 28. 29. 30. 31. 34. 38. 40. 44. 46. 49. 51. 52. 53. 57. 58. 86. 89. 98. 100. 102. 103. 125
Chester: St Werburgh's: 22. 24. 29. 30. 32. 33. 40. 60. 61. 64. 98. 100. 103.
Collison, M Josephine: 120
Condron, Mary: 96
Congregations etc: 8. 14. 23. 32. 33. 37. 40. 133. 139
Connolly, Cecilia: 95
Connolly M. Scholastica (Catherine): 15
Converts: 14 -15. 79
Coppinger, M Gerard: 94. 110. 134. 136. 137. 140
Corpus Christi: 27-28. 38. 123
Costigan, Helen: 136. 93
Coughlin, Bernadette: 135
Crank Margaret: 136
Curtin, Katherine: 135
Dallow, Wilfrid, Canon, Chaplain at Upton (1885 -1917): 8. 22. 24. 27. 31. 49. 50. 66
de Bussy, Marie, Third General Superior: 4. 17. 26
de Bengy, Marie Madeleine, Foundress: 1. 2. 7. 8. 9. 10. 12. 13. 15. 16. 30. 42. 49. 56. 123. 136. 142
December 8th: 22 -25. 51. 123. 133
Dempsey, Ethna: 135
Denye, Mr A.J.: 97
Diggle, Mrs: 131
Doherty, M M Paul: 127. 134. 135
Donworth, M Albertine: 135

- Duckett, M *Victoire*: 43.(44).57.79.90. 103
Dundon, M *Monica*: 127. 131. 132
Dupont, M *Clotilde*: 4.5.12.20.42
Dupont, M *Victoire*: 42
Durrick, *Ursula*: 133-4
Eccles, Miss: 126
Evans, M *Mildred*: 86
Examining Boards: 50-51
Extreme Unction: 39
Fairclough, M *Marcelina*: 58
Farrell, M *Pauline*: 126. 135
Finlay, *Victoire*: 136
First Communions: 8. 23. 27. 30. 35. 37.
38. 80.123
First Fridays: 33. 38. 71
Fishwick, Sr Barbara, Carmelite: 136
Fleming, M *Gabriel*: 68
Gadsby family: 137-139
Galvin, Jane: 135
Gavazzi: 17-18
Gibbons, Mrs: 131
Gibson, M *Mary Frances*: 4.11. 34. 40. 65.
66. 75. 85. 89.133
Gillow, M *Cecilia*: 95
Goddard, Marguerite: 135
Gray, Miss: 120. 141
Guilds, see Congregations
Hamilton, Carmel: 58.136
Hamilton, Mrs: 132
Hand, Cajetan: 134
Hannay, Mrs: 106
Hanning, M *Mechtilde*: 126
Hartigan, M *Magdalen*: 126. 134
Hartigan, M *Philomena*: 94 139
Hawarden: 108. 109.
Hayes, Christine: 68. 95
Hayes, Gerard: 58
Hayes, Madeleine: 95
Hayes, Veronica: 58. 93
Hayes, Miss: 126
Heathley H.S.: 92. 93. 132
Heaton, Cuthbert (*Frances*): 95
Heery, Mr J.: 97
Higgins, Philomena, Fifth General Superior:
102.112
HMS Exeter: 114. 115
HMS Argonaut: 115
HMS Birkenhead: 106
Hodgson, Rev. Richard: 8
Holland, M *Mary Clare*: 127
Hollingsworth, Beryl (aka Berlie
Doherty): 140-141
Holt Hill: 13.16. 24. 26-32. 34. 35.37-40.
42-44. 46. 47. 50-53. 57. 58. 63.
80-83. 85-87. 89-93.100,103-109.
111-126. 128 -130.132.134-136
Holt Hill PPA: 29. 91. 123. 130-132
Holy Souls: 33. 124
Horner, M *Borgia (Winifred)*: 58
Hothersall, Maureen 95
Jaques, Janet: 130
Jones, M *Elizabeth*: 13
Keane, M *Frances*: 68
Keegan, Miss Eileen: 131
Kelly, M *Philomena*: 85.86
Kenny, M *Aloysia*: 39
Kerrigan,Alphonsus: 134
Kerwan,Alphonsine: 134
Kingston, M *Millicent*: 126
Knight, Edmund, Second Bishop of
Shrewsbury: 34. 37. 44. 49. 65. 81. 83
Lafferty, Theresa: 134
Lee, Miss: 126
Leo XIII: 44.47-48
Lingdale House: 3-12. 15. 25. 26. 31. 42.
49. 57. 95. 123. 125. 138
Litten, Winifred: 108. 127.
Long, M *Agnes*: 96.141
MacDonald, M *Hilda*: 126. 127. 132
MacMahon, M *Clotilde*: 63
MacNicholas, Mrs (née Sheppard),
Patricia: 133-4
Maddocks, Mrs:131
Madigan, Loretta: 97
Maher, Miriam: 96
Mangan, M *Maria*: 40. 58
Marchand, Miss: 141
Marian Devotions (see also December
8th) 25 -27
Marian H.S.: 92.93.127.132

- Marian Year: 135 -136
 Marsden, Canon: 47. 58.125
 Martin, Mrs: 141
 Masterson, Valerie: 130
 Mayer of Munich: 44
 McAllinden, Winefride: 112
 McCullough, M Cajetan: 86. 87
 McGeough, Joan: 135
 McGoldrick, Mrs Veronica: 140
 McGrath, Rosalie: 129. 136
 McKenna, M Xavier: 81
 McKeown, Aloysius (Patricia): 134
 McMahon, M Christina: 126
 Mills, Camilla: 134
 Moriarty, Ambrose, Sixth Bishop of Shrewsbury: 50. 53. 68. 104
 Morton, Margaret: 130
 Murphy I.A., Seventh Bishop of Shrewsbury: 8. 53. 69. 91
 Needlework guild: 82-84
 Night Schools: 70 -77
 Norcross, Paula: 127
 O'Rourke, Miss: 126
 O'Toole, Canon A.T.: 47. 81
 ORP Piorum: 115
Petit, Josephine, Second General Superior: 4.5.19. 31. 33. 44. 59
 Pemberton, M M Joseph: 68. 93. 95
 Plowden, Miss: 141
 Prestage, Stephanie: 130
 Preston, M Xavier: 133
 Processions: 15. 24. 26. 27. 28. 31. 35. 41. 69. 109. 123. 129.
 Productions: 49. 50. 69. 103. 124. 130
 Pugin: 19
 Pullen, Sister Jean, Poor Clare: 137
 Pupil Teachers: 57-58
 Quarante Ore: 28
 Quigley, Catherine: 133
 Quinn, Ven. Edel: 139-140
 Quish, M Cleophas: 58
 Retreats: 9. 11. 123. 131
 Robinson, M Beatrice: 85. 86. 112. 126.
- Roche, M Cecilia: 126. 132
 Russell, M Aloysia: 17.18. 20
 Sacred Heart: 1.20. 23. 27.28-30. 32. 35. 36. 37. 45. 93. 111. 129.
 Saints: 30
 Scott, Rose: 85. 86
 Sherlock, Anne: 130
 Shrewsbury, Earls of: 3. 10. 11. 19
 Singleton, Hugh, Fifth Bishop of Shrewsbury: 43. 52. 66. 79. 103.
 Sodalities, see Congregations
 South African War: 102
 Spanish Civil War: 106
 St Winefride's S. M. School: 92
 St Joseph: 10.31-32.35.36.61.105.133
 Statues, grottoes: 14. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 29. 32. 35-37. 44. 111. 129
 Stewart, M M Agnes: 126-127
 Stritch, M Josephine: 17
 Sykes, Mary Claire (aka Marie): 127
 Terroni, Paula, Ninth General Superior: 127
 Till, M Francis: 126
 Topham Family: 57
 Trent, M Alphonsine: 63
 Upton Hall: 4. 7-9.11. 23-27. 29-32. 42. 44. 46. 47. 49-53. 57. 85-88. 93-104.107.111. 114.116-123. 126.133-137.139.140.
 Upton Manor: 94. 95
 Upton: St Joseph's Elementary School: 62. 64. 66-69. 72. 95.102. 105.106.110.115-119.122.123
 Ursuline Sisters (OSU): 5.16. 20. 21. 89
 Victoria, Queen: 76. 98. 101
 Walsh, M Sophie: 87
 West Kirby: 65. 66.102.113
 Workhouses: 78-81
 World War I: 102-106
 World War II: 106 -124
 Yates, Mr John: 3. 11. 12. 78
 Young, Mrs Patricia: 97

