

One hundred and fifty years
of service to Catholic Education

... with

Devotedness

and

Love

1844–1994

Faithful Companions of Jesus

1844 - The Faithful Companions of Jesus
undertook the Direction
of the Girls' and Infants' Department
and have since continued

With Devotedness and Love ...

(Taken from 'Gleanings from the History of St Patrick's'
by Edward Canon Goethals, quoted in
'Annals of St Patrick's from 1821 - 1921'
in the 'Souvenir of St Patrick's Bazaar 1923')

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To celebrate one hundred and fifty years of anything is not simply an exercise in nostalgia. Rather it is to reflect on God's grace in action in the local community and to rejoice in the fidelity of those who were his instruments.

And for ourselves, it is an opportunity to recognise our past, to understand what moved our predecessors and, from that solid basis, to evaluate our present.

In this spirit, we invite you to thank God for the often heroic fidelity of Faithful Companions of Jesus who have gone before.

Mary Campion McCarren fcJ
Liverpool
September 25th 1994

‘With Devotedness and Love’

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‘I Thirst!’

How it all began

When the Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus, came to Liverpool in 1844, it was because in Father Parker’s invitation to come to Saint Patrick’s parish, they heard the cry of Jesus: ‘I Thirst’.

Marie Madeleine d’Houët, the foundress, had herself heard those words as she waited for Mass on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in 1817.

*‘On the feast of the Sacred Heart I was waiting for Mass...
Suddenly I distinctly heard a voice calling to me from the
Crucifix on the altar: ‘I thirst’.*

I was deeply moved by these words.

*I knelt in adoration and offered myself to God
with my whole heart for all that he asked of me.*

The feast itself was significant since it is the celebration of the tender, caring compassionate love of God revealed to us in the person of Jesus. He compared himself to a mother hen longing to gather her chicks under her wing; to a shepherd who risks everything for the sake of a sheep which has gone astray. The crucifix is the sign of the culminating redemptive act, the sign of Jesus’ passion, the sign of his zeal. The altar, of course, is the sacred place of the on-going sacrifice.

‘Thirst’, whilst describing an intense physical state is also applicable to a state of yearning, of longing and Marie Madeleine understood this thirst of Jesus to be his great longing to draw us all to his Father. As the days went by she understood more clearly that the words encompassed not simply the thirst of the historical Jesus but his on-going thirst to be known and loved throughout the world to the end of time. Furthermore she realised that the words also encompassed the thirst of Jesus incarnate in the contemporary world.

Her immediate response was her self-offering from a stance of adoration and wonder; the offering of herself for whatever God might ask.. Hers was not a response to a specified need, but a wholehearted,open-ended response to the Lord. Gradually she learnt that she was to be primarily a companion, a faithful companion of Jesus; of Jesus thirsting.... This immediately puts her into relationship with people. As future generations were to say: 'Our mission is always to persons', to those whom Jesus calls his brothers and sisters, those of whom he says 'whatever you do to them, you do to me.'

So the Society which Marie Madeleine founded was centred on Jesus and devoted to education, retreat work and missions wherever they were needed. In this way the Sisters would share in the mission of Jesus,teacher, healer, revelation of the Father. In the early years of the nineteenth century the crying needs in post-revolutionary France were for basic education especially of the poor · and of women and girls. They had been deprived of any opportunity for basic education, even for basic hygiene, and, in many cases, of any preparation for earning a decent living. Similarly they had been deprived of religious instruction and preparation for the sacraments.

Early Foundations

In 1820, Marie Madeleine began in a small way in Amiens, in the Somme. Her maxim was 'the children before everything'. She gathered together youngsters who spent their day teasing out cotton ends so that their parents might spin and weave them as a means of livelihood. As their parents spent twelve hours a day in the factories, so these children spent twelve hours a day with the Sisters. Songs, bible tales and hymns were simple means she used whilst the children got on with their appointed task; opportunities to play and especially opportunities to play in a garden were rich reward for attendance! In addition to the cotton pickers, there were groups of girls who, besides receiving a basic education,were being trained

for positions in domestic service, as laundresses and maids. More than 80 factory girls came in the evenings from 7p.m. to 10p.m. and with them came 'elderly women who have forgotten how to pray and have not made their first communion.... They have now promised to come on Sunday afternoons if I can give them a playing-ground.'

In 1823 the Archbishop of Bourges invited her to make a second foundation, this time in Châteauroux. He pointed out to her that no other town in France was in greater need... a sure way of touching her heart! She again made sure she had a building and a garden large enough for her purpose. She rented an old Convent which had been taken over as a prison during the Revolution and lately served as Senate House. The building gave her lots of scope for setting up schools. Each morning at seven o'clock no fewer than five hundred small girls arrived, most of them with their baskets of cotton ends, attracted not only by the free school but inevitably by its Park. Once again she had large gatherings on Sundays, young women, old women, mothers with their children, all eager for instruction in the faith denied them for so long. Songs, hymns, stories, games and gentle conversation - Marie Madeleine saw them all as means of bringing the love of Jesus to those thirsting for it.

London

By 1830 Madame d'Houët was ready for the Society to expand beyond France. She set out for Belgium with Mother Julie Guillemet, the youngest and dearest of the first group of Sisters. Belgium proved to be in the grip of the struggle for independence and the travellers were advised to try London and given a letter of introduction to Father Nerinckx, a refugee priest there.

Madame d'Houët had no English at all! Mother Julie had studied the rules of English grammar without ever having spoken the language! Undeterred they set out and reached their destination on Julie's twenty-third birthday! The greater part of the remaining twenty seven years of her life was destined to be spent in England.

Father Nerinckx and his sister were: found to be in charge of a well established school for girls in London, at Somers Town. It had been founded by Abbe Caron, for children of families who had fled from France, and passed by him to the care of the Nerinckxes. Now they in their turn asked Madame d'Houët to accept it. Convinced that this was what God wanted. Marie Madeleine agreed to take over the responsibility.

On December 10th, an English speaking young lady came, asking to join the Society. Mary Stokes was from Ireland. She says of herself 'I understood French and spoke it a little.' Marie Madeleine arranged for her to stay with Mother Julie for a while before going to one of the French foundations to make her noviceship. On December 23rd three more Sisters arrived from France and the enterprise was ready to begin Mother Julie was in charge and had won all hearts by her sweetness and gentleness. In 1835 a second house was opened in London: a foundation was made at Tottenham for poor children. The pastor there was the Rt Rev. Dr Branston and his notice in the Laity Directory of 1832 states that

without these schools, these poor children would be either decoyed into the numerous sectarian schools in the neighbourhood, or be suffered to wander about the streets and exposed to every kind of wickedness. These schools are, therefore, an asylum for these poor children; but to continue open this asylum, pecuniary assistance is indispensably required; for the pastor has no funds whatever at his disposal.

In 1840 there was a foundation made at Isleworth in West London. Madame d'Houët had been hoping for an opportunity to establish a boarding school for girls seeing this as a means of doing good among those who would be in a position to influence others later on. In order to be able to buy Gumley House she had to acquire a certificate of residence which, she says, 'the Queen and Parliament

have graciously granted me.' The Spring of 1841 was sheer delight to her, the gardens, the birds, the shrubs were unfailing sources of joy and must have been a great change for Mother Julie who left Somers Town to supervise the new foundation.

The following year brought not simply a new foundation but a foundation in a new country.

Liverpool via Oughterard

Dr. Kirwan, parish priest of Oughterard in Connemara, came to London appealing for funds. He visited the parishes at both Somers Town and Gumley and having met the Faithful Companions of Jesus decided to invite them to the West of Ireland. In 1843 Julie set off to investigate the situation. Before long she had rented a house there and begun a school for the poor children.

In 1844 Doctor Kirwan, well known as a fine preacher, was invited by his friend, Father Parker, Parish Priest of St Patrick's Parish in Liverpool to preach the Annual Charity Sermon on behalf of the school which had been opened in 1835. St Patrick's was a parish with a large Irish population who, like the French in London, had been forced out of their own country, though in this case: by famine and economic need. Like the French families in Amiens and Châteauroux twenty years previously these families knew poverty, sickness and hardship; deprived of instruction in the faith and basic education their needs were obvious and great. As Father Parker related them all to his friend and asked his advice, Dr. Kirwan had only one answer: *See Mother Julie and ask her to ask Madame d'Houët to send Sisters to Liverpool.*

Fr. Parker who was 'distressed by the misery material and spiritual' of his people, took his friend's advice and went to Isleworth where he successfully pleaded his case with Mother Julie. On May 29th 1844, in the name of the foundress, she promised him that the Faithful Companions of Jesus would accept the direction of his school if he

in his turn would undertake to help them open a boarding school. In the years since her first arrival in England, Madame d'Houët had come to see the importance of being involved with more than one type of good work. She did not want her Sisters to be dependent financially on the work in parish schools and in addition the establishment of boarding schools served another kind of need. There was too the hope that, like Gumley and Somers Town, it might provide candidates for the expanding works of the Society.

Most of us today are riveted by photographs of famine stricken Ethiopians and Rwandan refugees. But in the Ireland of the 1840s there were the same pathetic skeletons, the same starving eyes and the immigrants to Liverpool were in effect refugees.

In August both Marie Madeleine and Julie spent some days in Liverpool. There she met Bishop George Brown and his assistant Monsignor Sharples. From them she learned of the grave social evils resulting from the industrialisation of the port of Liverpool, of the misery and vice rampant in overcrowded areas, the degradation of men and women born in the faith but without instruction, often without hope. She heard how little children between the ages of six and twelve were employed in the textile industry, spending fourteen hours a day knotting the threads on the looms for a wage of a few pence, hardly sufficient to buy a loaf of bread. The Foundress rapidly lost her heart to the poor of Liverpool.

(God's Faithful Instrument: P. Grogan fcJ, page 189-190)

And no wonder! In the situation confronting her Sisters she could quite clearly hear the cry of Jesus: I thirst!

Liverpool 1844

When Father Parker wrote formally to the foundress inviting her to take charge of the Parish Girls' and Infants' Schools, he addressed the letter to her at 116 Islington, the house of a Mr Denis Madden in which one of St Patrick's priests, Father Haggar, was to die of plague only three years later.

The Sisters must have known that they faced great difficulties in their new apostolate but it is doubtful if they could have guessed at the full scale of the problems before them.

Great George's Square

Marie Madeleine and Julie Guillemet soon took possession of a large house at Number 2, Great George's Square, the East side. This was one of the best addresses in the town at the time. A satirical verse speaks of the determination of an upwardly mobile lady to move there for she had heard

*'Of the song of the birds in the fresh morning air,
Of the first rate Society found in the Square ...'*

Contemporary Buildings

Liverpool was in many respects an opulent sea port, with buildings on a grandiose scale. The foundation stone of St George's I-WI was laid in 1838 to mark Queen Victoria's Coronation. Faulkner Terrace and Gambier Terrace had been built in the decade before and Princes Road, the height of elegance, was laid out a couple of years after the community arrived.

Immigration

Very close to these elegant houses were areas in which living conditions were a nightmare and much of the Sisters' work was here. The movement of people from the country districts to the towns and

cities which was taking place all over the industrialising country was accentuated by the Irish immigrants who flocked to Liverpool. Many sailed on from the port across the Atlantic in the so-called 'coffin ships', so called because of the large number of deaths on them.

Even the journey to Liverpool was hazardous. In December 1848 on a trip from Sligo to Liverpool, 206 dock passengers were forced below by bad weather, packed into a space 18 feet by 10 feet by 7 feet. Seventy-two died of suffocation. In April 1849 coming from Dublin, three deck passengers died from exposure. It is estimated that in the worst famine year, 1847, more than 100,000 emigrants sailed for Canada and at least a fifth of them died at sea. Poverty had driven people to cross the Irish Sea in a growing stream since about 1800 but the Potato Blight led to the famine which resulted in the greatest movement.

Living Conditions and Disease

The poor people lived in squalid conditions, many in damp, overcrowded cellars. The priests were reported to have had to use their top hats as tables at times for want of a clean place when they took Communion to the sick.

In one of the worst areas near Great Crosshall Street, it was estimated that 7,938 people lived in an area of 49,000 square feet (4508 square metres.) In London conditions were bad, 32 out of every 100 children died before reaching the age of nine. In Liverpool as a whole the figure went up to 49 children; and in the Vauxhall Ward, typical of the worst overcrowding, poorest sanitation and greatest poverty, 64 out of every 100 children died before their ninth birthdays.

The Martyrs of the Plague

Cholera and typhoid spread rapidly. The worst year was 1847. Mother Xavier O'Neill fcj, headmistress of St Patrick's died during the epidemic.

Of the ten priests listed on the Plague Cross outside St Patrick's, four, including Father Parker, are from the parish. Their courage in visiting the plague victims in the cellars and slums won them the title 'martyr priests', matching the better known Reformation martyrs like Ambrose Barlow and John Almond.

The sub-deacon at Father Parker's Requiem Mass was a young priest, Father Nugent, who was to become famous for his work of providing for the destitute children of the city.

An eye witness gave a chilling account of the parish at the time, just three years after the Sisters came. He recalled a messenger coming to the Pro-Cathedral and saying hurriedly, 'For God's sake will some of you come to St Patrick's and bury the dead, the church is full of corpses, and all the priests are now down. The dead and the dying are lying down together.' The little children, already doomed, were playing with the wood shavings on which the bodies lay. He went on to say that St Patrick's Church was closed, the presbytery door stood open but there were no priests within, and when Sunday came, silence reigned round the altar.

The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 ended most of the disabilities affecting Catholics and Nonconformists such as restrictions on land inheritance, bars against membership of the armed forces and legal profession, and graduation from University. The movement had been supported by the Liberals but not much by the Catholics of Liverpool who seem to have kept a low profile until 1824 when they joined in a campaign led by William Rathbone for civil and religious liberty.

There was considerable local sympathy for the Catholics. The building of St Patrick's in 1821 marked a new era. It was funded by public subscription

and as well as offerings of the English Catholics, many leading Whigs in the city gave generously. The Irish Regiment was stationed in the city at the time and permission was granted for the men to march in the procession which marked the laying of the foundation stone. The statue of St Patrick was the first outward sign of Catholicism since the Reformation. The members of the Society of St Patrick minuted that the 'contemplate with delight the gradual extinction of those prejudices founded on unmerited suspicion and wicked misrepresentations which have so long operated.

However, there was also strong anti-Catholic feeling which persisted well into the twentieth century. It is difficult to imagine the tensions that existed in those days when we consider the close associations between Christians in Liverpool today.

Political Exploitation of Religious Tensions.

Education in Liverpool was strongly bound up with politics in the 1840s. In the late eighteenth century, the Tory Council had not been anti-Catholic; for example, St Peter's See Street, was built in 1788 on land leased from the council at a quite reasonable figure. However this was changed by the 1835 Act which allowed many more people to vote in local elections. The wider franchise led to a Whig Victory in December 1835, with the party, then including William Rathbone, taking 43 of the 48 seats on the council which had previously been solidly Tory. Religious tensions were fully exploited in the campaigns leading to the next election. The Tories regained control, having spent five years stirring up racial and religious bigotry in the town and exploiting the problems raised by the immigrants. The issue of education had been central to the campaign and the Catholics were seriously disadvantaged by the Tory victory of 1841.

The Sisters arrived therefore at a time when Catholic children had in effect been excluded from the Council schools by a change of policy which insisted on the use of the Authorised Version of the Bible and a common form of prayer.

The Catholic authorities wrote to the Council that they begged ‘most respectfully to state... that they cannot conscientiously concur in such arrangements whereby the religious principles of the children attending the schools will be compromised.’ Catholic children were withdrawn from the Council schools and a number of Catholic Schools as well as Churches opened in the next few years. The Irish Christian Brothers came to St Patrick’s in 1842. The Benedictines began the building of St Anne’s Overbury Street and St Oswald’s in Old Swan was opened. Daniel O’Connell, then Lord Mayor of Dublin spoke at a meeting to raise funds for the Jesuits to build St Francis Xavier’s Church. Several other religious orders came to work in the city at this time, including the Sisters of Notre Dame, Sisters of the Good Shepherd and Sisters of Mercy.

Public Disorder

The FCJs also had to face the riots in the area. There had been a confrontation between Irish and police in Park Lane in 1835 ended by troops sent in by the Mayor. In 1841 there were clashes between immigrants and the ships’ carpenters, a group feeling threatened by competition for work at a time when iron hulled ships were reducing their opportunities. Many of St Patrick’s windows were broken and a woman praying in the church died of fright. Feelings ran high and next day St James’ Anglican church windows were smashed in retaliation in spite of the priests’ appeal against revenge.

In 1844, the year the Faithful Companions of Jesus arrived, there were several attacks on St Patrick’s and the Mayor was asked to provide protection, which he did. In 1848 attempts were made to pull down St Patrick’s statue and one of its fingers was broken off.

Religious Intolerance – The Background

Liverpool was not a very large town until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and it did not have a cathedral. Religious persecution in Penal times was somewhat less fierce than in more politically significant areas.

Despite its lack of importance there is a very long Christian tradition which includes the story that St Patrick preached in the town on his way to the Isle of Man. At least until 1775 a cross marked the place very near to the present church of Holy Cross. The church of St Mary in Walton dates from Saxon times and is mentioned in the Domesday Book. There was a chapel in the Castle, where Queen Victoria's monument now stands. The church of St Mary of the Quay, close to the river, near the present Pier Head and the 'chapel' of 'Chapel Street', was mentioned in a document of the mid-thirteenth century, but had been built years before that. The Church of St Nicholas was built in 1355 just behind the little chapel of St Mary of the Quay. At the time of the Reformation in the mid-sixteenth century, St Nicholas' became the parish church for the established Church of England and the little chapel was used by the town as a warehouse.

Many families remained true to the Catholic faith, Names that occur in a warning to the mayor of 'disaffection' are the Harringtons of Huyton and the Blundells of Crosby and the Scarisbricks of Scarisbrick. The main reason that Spoke Hall is an unaltered example of a Tudor house is that the Norris family had to pay so much in tax because they remained Catholics for several generations that they did not have the money for improvements. The last wing to be built included a priest's hole as a hiding place for the clergy who visited the family when possible. Hiding was important because the penalty for being a priest was to be hanged, drawn and quartered. Ambrose Barlow, a Benedictine monk was executed in this way in 1641.

In the eighteenth century it was possible to be a Catholic without serious risk of legal action being taken and a number of priests, many of them Jesuits, served Liverpool and built several small chapels, disguising them as ordinary buildings. One was in Sir Thomas' Buildings in the present Sir Thomas Street. This stood until 1898 but the site is now part of the Education Offices. Although they were disguised, the chapels were attacked many times. Worshippers had to go into the buildings in small groups so as not to draw attention to them and the bell was not rung at mass for fear of alerting enemies to what was going on.

The Needs Met by the Sisters

One of the FCJ Sisters writing in 1863 gives some idea of the needs of the adult women as well as the children for education. 'The parish of St Patrick's ... is the resort of a number of poor Irish families whom destitution has forced to quit their fatherland. The greater number come from the out-of-the-way country districts in Ireland far removed from the populous centres. The clergy there, too few in these days to attend to the spiritual wants of their widely dispersed flocks, can visit them but rarely, and stay a very short time with them. Thus these poor people grow up sadly ignorant of their religion and, when they settle in the land of their exile, and wish to approach the sacraments, the priests often find them wanting in the needful knowledge.' The Sisters received these poor women 'with open arms' and held regular meetings for them.

Evening classes were held for many years, instructing the women, preparing them for the sacraments and attempting to help them cope with poverty, disease, crime and drunkenness. Some of them were so poor that they could not attend church until they had been provided with clothes.

The pressure on the Sisters was enormous. For example they were asked to hold classes every evening, not just twice a week. Marie Madeleine

wrote to Mother Julie, 'Tell Father Parker that God alone can do everything at once; human beings have to take time.' She also insisted that Father Parker should not go in and out of the schools as he pleased!

In spite of riot, plague, political dissension and whatever problems Father Parker had caused by going 'in and out as he pleased' the Sisters remained in Liverpool and their work spread to other parishes as these were built. Some of today's difficulties echo those of the past but Marie Madeleine and Julie Guillemet would find plenty to thank God for if they could see the south end of Liverpool today.

St Patrick's

The call to Liverpool was the Society's · first undertaking in the industrial North of England and was very much after Madame d'Houët's own heart. The need was great, there was much good to be done.

Early Days: 1844–1846

The story of the early days of Liverpool undertaking has been graphically described by Sister Patricia Grogan.

After their day's work (the women) readily came for instruction and preparation for the sacraments. During these sessions they were made aware of their dignity both as human beings and children of God. Besides being taught to pray, they learned how to improve the sad conditions in which they were living.

As was to be expected there were many difficulties: some of these arose from the heavy demands made on the community or the ill-health of the Sisters, other from Father Parker's eagerness to get everything moving immediately. 'God alone who is omnipotent', wrote Marie Madeleine, 'can take on all things at once. We poor creatures must take both time and means.'

The task facing the community was immense, becoming a broad fundamental mission of human assistance covering many diverse ministries. To the poor children, besides a basic elementary instruction, the Sisters taught personal cleanliness, order, self-respect. They gave bread to the hungry, clothes to those in rags, to all their love and understanding.

Months later Father Parker wrote expressing his appreciation to Madame d'Houët:

'Your Sisters have a special grace for instructing our poor women. We notice that once these good people have been under instruction with them, they make good confessions....

It often happens these poor women come to the confessional, unkempt and barely covered with unsightly rags, their sordid surroundings having all but obliterated every vestige of civilisation.

We send them to your Sisters and in three weeks or so they return decently clad, well prepared for the sacraments and both ready and happy to begin a new Christian life. I have arranged with my assistant priest that in future we shall admit to the sacraments only those newcomers to the parish who bring a not signed by the sister responsible for their instruction. In our many heavy parish duties, it is a relief for us to be able to hand over these poor women to your Sisters and to feel that we can rely upon their ready and willing co-operation.'

Initially the classes were held twice a week but it soon became necessary to hold them every evening of the week and on Sunday afternoons as well.

There is recorded an incident which throws light on what was going on!

A man from St Patrick's parish called at the convent one Sunday, asking to see the Sister in charge of the women's classes. He came, quite unknown to his wife, to report on her progress! 'Since she has attended your classes,' he said, 'things are going fine at home; no more swearing, no quarrelling in the house. We pray together morning and night, and even keep silence at times.' This last item seemed to surprise

him more than anything else. He added, however, that Sister's work was not yet completed; his wife still had certain faults to be corrected. 'I will come from time to time', he assured Sister, 'to report on my wife's progress, but I beg you don't let her know anything about this!' The Foundress was visiting Liverpool at the time and thoroughly enjoyed the incident!

Mother Xavier O'Neill

From 1842, the Irish Christian Brothers had been teaching the boys of the area but there is no record of classes for girls and infants. There was only one building available, that in South Chester Street; the boys remained on the upper floor and the girls and infants occupied the ground floor. Soon there were 400 of them, only four of whom had made their first Communion so preparation for the sacraments was a major Work. The Sisters also established the Sodality of Our Lady and the Association of Christian Mothers. Mother Xavier O'Neill fcJ was the first Headmistress of St Patrick's school and, besides being headmistress, she was the moving force behind the missionary work done amongst the women and girls.

One of her contemporaries describing Mother Xavier's punishing schedule says that by 1845 there were between five and six hundred in the school and then she took the adults each evening. On Sunday mornings she was with the children at Mass, on Sunday evenings there was an Instruction for adults. Mother Xavier had never been physically strong so it was no wonder that when typhoid fever broke out she became infected with the disease and died on April 30th 1846, fearfully disfigured and discoloured, her face covered with scars.

The work of the Sisters was already expanding when the potato famines of 1846 and 1847 brought thousands more Irish immigrants to Liverpool. Park Lane and the area around St Patrick's was the district to which they were drawn. Liverpool Corporation and the merchants who firmly

believed that *Deus nobis haec otia fecit* were anxious to help the newcomers but it was impossible for anyone to keep pace with the great numbers. Inevitably amongst those who died of the epidemic whilst serving the sick and dying was Father Parker, April 27th 1847.

By 1857 there were six hundred in the day school, sixty in the night school, seven hundred in the Sunday school and three hundred and fifty adults being instructed and prepared for the sacraments.

Mother Julia Stack

It is not clear who followed Mother Xavier as Headmistress but from 1870 to 1886 that position was held by Mother Julia Stack, known throughout the area as 'gentle Mother Julia'. It could well be that she was already in office by that date, since the Census returns for 1861 show that she was in the community at Gt George's Square, but it is following the 1870 Education Act that the School log book begins. Mother Julia who had made her noviciate under the direction of the Foundress, was the only certified teacher in the school; the staff consisted entirely of pupil-teachers and monitresses. There was still a great deal of poverty and there are many entries showing donations received to buy clogs for the most needy and of dinners being given at one halfpenny each 'for those who could afford a halfpenny—otherwise free.'

Like Mother Xavier before her, Mother Julia was in charge of the Night Schools and Children of Mary. No wonder that even after her death it was not uncommon for FCJs to hear 'God bless you, Mother Julia', murmured after them by old men and women as they passed in the streets.

In 1871 Inspectors visited the school for the first time. They appear to have been satisfied with the work of staff and pupils but, when he read their comments on the overcrowded state of the school, the Parish Priest, Father Goethals, must have been relieved to be able to say that a new

building, for Girls and Infants, was almost ready in Hyslop Street.

But one new building was not enough. The numbers continued to grow and after each inspection the same comment was made: 'School badly overcrowded; additional accommodation very desirable.' In 1868 a new parish, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, had been formed and a school chapel did something to relieve the pressure on St Patrick's but on March 10th 1877 the Log book reads: 'School overcrowded; about 200 children belonging to neighbouring districts dismissed by the Manager on account of the overcrowded state of the school. Great confusion caused by the dismissal of the children. Parents entreating for their readmission.'

It is difficult to say precisely how many FCJs were in the schools in the early days - the Census returns for 1851 do not list occupations; in 1861 there are seven mentioned as teaching and by 1871 there are thirteen, without specifying which school anyone is in. What we do know from a letter written on behalf of the Superior General, Mother Josephine Petit in 1877 is that she was concerned about Mother Julia being 'alone in that large room'. She arranged for Mother Helena 'to go with her even though the government does not exact a second mistress'. Mother Helena will not be paid—she is there 'to be with Mother Julia and to be formed herself for school work so that she may be useful when required.' Later, Mother Helena remains at home in the Square to give music lessons and Sister Winifred goes to St Patrick's. Sister Winifred we learn later, stayed only till 4.30 and went home 'when Sister takes the tea to St Patrick's... and the rest are together giving the pupil teachers' lessons.' When Sister Mary Joseph Carroll died in 1908 at 'an advanced age' she remembered clearly the early days in Great George's Square and the Dean of St Patrick's reminded his hearers of how she had 'taught, lovingly, patiently when St Patrick's school was little more than a cellar.'

When Mother Julia left St Patrick's at the end of 1885, she went to Canada where she worked for another 25 years. After her death in Edmonton,

Alberta in March 1916, one priest remarked that 'she had fulfilled a lifetime of work even before she came to this continent' and when news of her death reached St Patrick's there was great sorrow. A solemn Requiem Mass was offered for her and the church was crowded by those who remembered her with deep love and gratitude. The affection between Mother Julia and the people of the parish was mutual. She had spent the last half hour of her life 'relating some oft-repeated story of St Patrick's' before collapsing and dying very suddenly.

M. Stanislaus Myerscough

When at Easter 1871 the girls and infants moved into the Hyslop Street premises, the Infants were separate and organised in an Infants' Department under the care of Mother Stanislaus Myerscough fcJ until 1910.

There was something 'so right about the fact that Mother Stanislaus should eventually die during the Christmas Season. Throughout the forty years she worked in St Patrick's Infants' School, the work of the Holy Childhood and devotions to the Infant Jesus were characteristics of the School. When she died on January 6th 1917 'The Catholic Times' reported how:

For forty year M. Stanislaus held sway with sweet dignity and kindly kindly firmness as Headmistress of St Patrick's Infants' School, and was deeply beloved by all the parish who owed to her their first lessons in the Faith and love of God. Brimful of zeal for the salvation of souls there was no action in her life but was actuated by spiritual motives, and this spirit she ever sought to instil into the minds fo her pupils. To the children under her care, the Baby Jesus was a living reality, partaking of all their little joys and sorrows, and ruling them as LITTLE KING. Children in school at the present day, often tell pious stories, give meditations etc. which Mother Stanislaus had taught

their mothers, and there is many a brave lad in the trenches today, who owes his strong faith to the early lessons received from this saintly Mother.

Mother Hilda Fletcher

In the Girls' School, Mother Julia was succeeded by Mother Hilda Fletcher who became a legend in her own life time.

Known variously as Miss Fletcher, Mother 'ilder and the 'Mother of the Poor', at the age of 22 she replaced Mother Julia as Headmistress in the Hyslop Street premises and at the age of 64 retired from the same position. Forty-two years (1886-1928) of 'highly successful service' carried out in a 'quietly efficient and sympathetic manner'. These are the words of the Director of Education who, at the time of Mother Hilda's retirement went on to say :

Your influence... has been at once an inspiration and a source of strength to your staff. This influence has been backed by an immense practicality.

This immense practicality showed itself in the way in which Mother Hilda pioneered the practical teach of Domestic Science under the normal conditions of the neighbourhood. Her vision and foresight were responsible to great extent for the improved living conditions in the area.

On Christmas Day 1895, the Sisters served breakfast 'for 240 of our poorest children whose hungry looking eyes brightened at the sight of a plentiful supply of food' and they distributed warm clothing which had been in part made by the community and in part made by others. 'We had the satisfaction of seeing them part with clothing which hardly deserved the name, being but a collection of rags.'

In 1897 in the examinations held by the Liverpool School Board of Domestic Economy, one of the St Patrick's girls won first prize and twenty-nine girls gained certificates from the Lancashire and Cheshire

Institute of Domestic Economy, Cookery and Dressmaking. And in 1899 a Protestant Clergyman, Chairman of the Liverpool School Board, 'was most delighted with the cookery kitchen, and in his report to the City Night Schools spoke in terms of high praise of the work done at St Patrick's.

For a long time unofficial laundry lessons were given, in that, twelve at a time, the older girls were encouraged to bring their own personal laundry to school on Friday mornings and in turn they were shown correct methods of washing and ironing. But in 1899 Mother Hilda persuaded the Liverpool School Board that dressmaking, cookery and laundry work should be incorporated into the ordinary curriculum. A former billiard room was fitted with teak washing-troughs, hot and cold water, ironing tables and equipment and Miss Travis was given permission to take a year out for the purpose of obtaining a Teaching Diploma in Laundry work.

Housecraft was added in 1909, and 1918 First Aid, Home Nursing and Care of Babies was added to the curriculum! Mother Hilda's concern was two fold—there was the personal training of her girls but there was also the fact that most of her pupils would go into domestic service and she wanted them to get the best jobs going!

By this time not only the curriculum was established, so too was the traditions of concerts, processions, retreats, sales of work... Christmas trees and toys sent by 'our good Protestant friend Mr. Bailey', tableaux vivants, mimes, puppet shows and baby shows. The Laundry was very versatile... it could on occasion be decorated with flags and flowers for a party for wounded soldiers, or be 'transformed into rooms which resemble a Continental Café of the latest type' (1917) or 'a delightful Japanese café' (1919).

And Mother Hilda's efforts to bring colour, literally, into the area are witnessed to by descriptions of Chinese Lanterns (1913), bowers of foliage erected to celebrate Dean Goethals Jubilee (1913), a May procession

'beautiful in its simplicity. The girls were dressed in pure white and wore silver wreaths, each child carrying a twig of lime, the tender green of which we piously believed was symbolic of the constancy of St Patrick's children to their Heavenly Queen. For this occasion the streets of the parish lose their sordid appearance and become long bowers of greenery in the midst of which many a shrine is erected in honour of the holy Mother of God' (1924).

During Mother Hilda's years as Headmistress the night classes established in 1844 for the religious and social education of the women were no longer needed for their original purpose. They were replaced in 1892 by evening classes for girls who had recently left school and for any of the senior girls who wished to attend. At these 'continuation classes' cookery, laundry work and dressmaking were taught and the members were encouraged to avail of the lending library.

One who like Mother Hilda, was loved throughout the parish, was **Mother Austin Hothersall**. She had first come to Liverpool in 1896 and taught at Robertson Street before moving to St Patrick's. She was renowned for her inexhaustible activity in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and the women of the parish loved her. She had the gift of making their every trouble her own and had a special gift of always making just the right inquiry about their well-being and never forgot anything they would like to have had remembered. For several years after her retirement she used to go with Mother Hilda to the Mothers' Guild every Monday afternoon. Similarly she had a great gift for instructing converts since 'her sympathy helped her enter into each one's difficulties and give to each the right kind of encouragement.'

In 1924 the Sodality of the Holy Family and St Anne was revived and the Sisters were asked to take charge. In addition to the church service there was a weekly gathering in the School basement. It was 'a busy cheerful time, making and mending-knitting, crochet and sewing machine.'

The children went down to entertain their mothers with little songs, dances, recitations and the older girls acted as waitresses... yet other ways in which Mother Hilda was making sure that the girls would acquire grace and elegance.

Another School Inspector's Report includes the judgement 'Reading has been taught in such a way that the older girls have been led to appreciate books'—and Mother Hilda built up a library with books available for borrowing, and singing, elocution, botany walks in the Parks, calisthenics, drill and above all, folk dancing were all part of her scheme of things.

There was no playground—just small cinder covered spaces either side of the church, so organised games were impossible. But folk dancing in the classrooms (with the benches pushed back), in the cloakroom, in the laundry (on cookery days), in the street (in fine weather!) was a great success. 'English country Morris and sword dances, Scottish, Scandinavian and Polish...' Teams of dancers were entered for festivals, just as choirs were entered for contests and individuals for essay competitions. In 1889 ten girls received prizes for good writing from Lewis's, two years later Kate Martin (Standard VI) received a certificate and book from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for an essay entitled: Kindness to Animals.

The Girls had benefited from the services secured by the Board of Education, of Mr Tomlins, the celebrated American professor of singing 'whose aim was to bring the heart and soul of the children into their voices, to make them feel the power of music...' and again it was a Protestant gentleman, Dr. Somerville, who said 'no where but in Catholic Schools do we find such results, such unfeigned simplicity and happiness.' '*Seventeen Come Sunday*' and '*Rule Britannia*' were favourites in their repertoire!

An outstanding feature of St Patrick's musical life was the singing of Gregorian Plain Chant. Fr. Anselm Burge OSB frequently dropped in to teach. At Dean Goethals' Golden Jubilee Mass in 1913 the girls 'sang several Latin Hymns one of which '*Quid retribuam Domino*' was composed specially by Dom Burge OSB'. By 1925 they were described as 'past mistresses in the art of Plain Song'. The *Dies Irae* and *Missa de Angelis* were old favourites and Our Lady's antiphons were sung each afternoon according to the season.

As time went on the fame of Mother Hilda's experiments and methods spread far beyond Liverpool; there were numerous visits from local Colleges, Schools—and places as far apart as Glasgow and London, Canada and France, USA and Finland. In January 1889 five ladies visited 'from France, Yorkshire and Cheshire. The lessons were interrupted to show the Calisthenic Exercises and that they might hear our pupils sing and recite. The song '*My dear, my native home*' was much admired. Our visitors expressed great satisfaction with everything and dwelt especially on the discipline, order and drill. Sweets were distributed.'

Ten years later, March 1909 'the Mayor and Director, Chairman and Secretary of Education for Derby came to see the Domestic Centre. Afterwards Children entertained the Visitors with Singing and Dancing till 12.30. Permission given to children to return twenty minutes later than usual'.

Not that the Directors were the only people the girls sang for! Between 1916–1918 the timetable was interrupted more than once to entertain wounded soldiers (among whom was Pt. Proctor VC) and to take part in Entertainment in the Park in aid of St Dunstan's Society for Blinded Soldiers and Sailors.

Other red-letter days in school life under the energetic Mother Hilda were a Geographical and Nature expedition to the estate of Mr. Brown, Dingle Lane; a visit for eighty children to the Art Gallery and 'Violin Recital

from 11-12 noon' In passing we note that in 1923 there was a picnic in Calderstones Park '*and the fifteen hundred made a nice little party for tea* (emphasis added!) which they took on the lawn of the refreshment pavilion.' Closer to home, balls, skipping ropes and basketballs were all gratefully received as additions to the school equipment.

The words of the Inspector's Report, 31/1/1905, say it all:

'A delightful School. Everything that is done is done well.'

As Headmistress and, until 1889, when Miss Amy Travis was appointed, the only certificated teacher, Mother Hilda was also responsible for training mistresses and pupil teachers. Demonstration and criticism lessons were all her responsibility and she seems to have fulfilled that as she did all others!

In a time when payment was by numbers and results, the school Log Book on occasions draws both smiles and tears. In bad weather lack of adequate clothing prevented attendance and there is constant reference to gifts of clothes, boots and hot dinners. Magic lantern shows were the reward for good attendance in 1887 and in the same year, other Hilda devised a system of giving a RED mark to a child present at 9 a.m.... and the prize for a row of red marks was 'a little picture'. But we are scarcely surprised that Mother Hilda's great love of children and of nature could make her stretch a point... On June 4th, 1915, she 'found seven Std II children chasing a butterfly in Park Road at 9.20; took them into school and marked them present'.

When Mother Hilda retired she was succeeded by **Mother Mary of the Cross Smedley** whose younger sister, later Mother Emmanuel Smedley, remembered Mother Hilda as being 'big-hearted... of average height and motherly in appearance.' Sister Emmanuel was aware of Mother Hilda's kindness when she turned up at St Patrick's to wish her elder sister 'A Happy Birthday', much to Mother Mary's embarrassment and Mother

Hilda's delight. The latter took over Mother Mary's class and sent the two Smedley's off to the 'Nuns' Room.

Born in Preston, Lancashire, March 26th 1863, **Anne Fletcher, (Mother Hilda)** child of Edward and Margaret (nee Knowles) entered at Lark Hill on November 1st 1881, received the habit at Middlesborough, July 20th 1182 and made her vows at Ste Anne d'Auray, September 14th 1844.

She died at Liverpool on Monday, October 22nd, 1934 and priests and people insisted that she be buried 'from the parish'.

The Bellerive Annals record that '*on the Tuesday evening a Choir of priests sang the Office for the dead with full ritual, in presence of a vast congregation which not only filled the Church but assisted in reverent silence outside in the pouring rain. On Wednesday morning the Solemn Requiem took place, the music being supplied by the senior children of the school. Again the church was thronged—women with shawls on their heads and babies in their arms, teachers who owed their careers to Mother Hilda's sympathetic interest and thorough training, old and young, men and women, who had in one way or another come under the influence of her glowing charity and encouraging presence. The streets were lined as for a royal cortège and the rosary was recited by the school children as the funeral procession left for Ford Cemetery.*'

More Recent Times

Mother Mary of the Cross, who went to St Patrick's in 1928 and remained until 1953, was intent on carrying on Mother Hilda's traditions. In her later years, Mother Mary loved to recall her years at St Patrick's and children and parents kept in touch with her until her death in 1985.

Teaching accommodation was on two floors each of which was partitioned off into at least five rooms. These partitions consisted of

flimsy green curtains hanging on somewhat unsteady poles. This arrangement was a great joy to the children but a challenge to the teachers! The basement had three fairly large rooms, partitioned by good solid walls. Down there children learnt country dancing to music frequently provided by the teacher's voice. Under these difficult conditions, Miss McNamara's classes won many shields and prizes.

This teacher, loved and respected by everyone, served on St Patrick's Staff for more than 30 years and after her retirement in 1963 continued to return as guest to school festivals. Her faithful accompanist, Miss Hudson, is still alive in 1994, and though over 100 years old still remembers vividly her days in St Patrick's and those with whom she worked.

Two other Faithful Companions of Jesus who served at St Patrick's were **Mother Madeleine Cuddy** who was on the Staff of the School 1949-1950 and **Mother Veronica Hayes** who, after a time in Birkenhead, later went to St Malachy's as Head.

During the Second World War, many of the streets adjacent to the School were completely destroyed with the result that the playground was far larger than it had been. Nonetheless the hillocks of rubble made the supervision of the playground difficult! The levelling and tarmacing of the playground was a project eagerly undertaken by **Mother Margaret Mary Rooney** who succeeded Mother Mary of the Cross in 1953.

She had spent all her early teaching years in St Patrick's, initially with Mother Mary in the Girls' School, later, in 1942, as Headmistress of the Infant School in Park Place. This building, named the Canon Goethal's Memorial School, had been begun in 1921 and Father Timmons, Canon Goethal's successor, survived just long enough to see the new School opened on October 15th 1928. Mother Margaret Mary was the first FCJ to be appointed Head

teacher there. During the difficult war years when numbers were large and material resources scarce, she had to cope with evacuation and with children who came home from evacuation. And the challenge to the faith and trust of the area was great. The school building suffered considerable bomb damage but the raids took place at night and the children turned up in the mornings ready to help sweep up broken glass and to tack sheets of tinted card into the window frames!

In 1953 Mother Margaret Mary crossed Park Road to take on the Girls' School where she found many of her former pupils awaiting her! Following recommendation of a General Inspection which had taken place earlier, the classroom accommodation improved dramatically and soon each class had its own room and storeroom; cloakrooms also were provided. Once the playground was in order, space for rounders and netball was close at hand and the girls were able to take part in inter-school matches. Around the same time the children became the proud owners of a school uniform and looked very smart in their light green blouses and darker green skirts, complete with dark green tie and cardigan.

If Father Parker had supported Mother Xavier, and Canon Goethals Mother Hilda, Monsignor Curry who had been appointed to the parish at the same time as she had been appointed to the school, left nothing undone to help Mother Margaret Mary. He purchased a large Hall in Park Road which was used as a centre for Youth work including the Guild of St Agnes. Mother Margaret Mary and her staff provided music and drama, first aid and needlework twice a week for many years.

In 1953, Mother Margaret Mary's place in the Infants' School was taken by **Sister Theresa Green** who remained in place until she retired in 1984. In Sister Theresa's time Maypole dancing, Nativity plays and religious mimes all continued to flourish along with Holy Childhood collections, RE examinations, the round of liturgical feasts and celebrations.

St Patrick's by this time had four May processions- three crownings by different sections of the School plus the parish procession. The Director of Education expressing his gratitude and that of the Liverpool Education Committee for her years of dedicated service recognised that *'a notable feature of your service has been your willingness to work in a socially and economically deprived area... you have always tried to provide an element of stability in the lives of the many children who have passed through your hands. Your good work and support have extended beyond the boundaries of the school into the community and you enjoy the respect and gratitude of parents, some of whom were your previous pupils'*. These were sentiments which would have rejoiced the heart of Marie Madeleine!

In 1959, Mother Margaret Mary moved to Gumley, Isleworth, and **Sister Helen Downes** became Head of the Girls School. **Sister Marie Therese Atkinson** served with her as an Assistant Teacher (1965-1969). The Annals of 1965 unconsciously echo so much from Mother Hilda's time and yet at the same time show how things were changing. Girls won places at Millbank College of Commerce and the Mabel Fletcher T.C. for Nursing and Catering; they won the Drama Festival... (and marched round singing 'We won the cup' as Liverpool F.C. had done!); they played rounders in the 'Gardens', bold earth patches surrounded by the tenements; they danced during a concert at the Philharmonic and as the Liverpool Show. The Sisters continued to take charge of the Guild of St Agnes and with Sister Helen's expertise as a music and drama specialist it was no surprise that on more than one occasion they won First Prize, once being asked to repeat their performance in the Crane Theatre. A new development was entry into the International Eisteddfod at Llangollen where, in 1961, the combined choirs of St Patrick's and Much Woolton, gained 5th place out of 37 including foreign choirs.

In 1965 work began on St Martin's Secondary Modern School. Sister Helen was Head at the transfer and at the opening. **Sister Mary Jordan**

replaced her in 1969 and remained for seven years during which time C.S.E. Public Examinations were introduced with very good results.

In the Junior School meanwhile, **Sister Magdalen Branwood** (1969-1911) was faced with a building no longer fit for use. In 1974 the Infants, now fewer than 100, had a good building, large, well-lighted classrooms—but the Junior Girls were still in the 1835 building with its 1857 addition! In December 1974 a 6" crack appeared between the two and ‘there followed a hurried exit from that end of the building and an equally accelerated end to further use when all essential services were cut off.

Although the FCJ connection with St Patrick’s did not end until 1984, we might do worse than end with the comments of the Local Press in 1975:

An important landmark in the history of St Patrick’s parish and Irish Liverpool came tumbling down to the ground with a resounding crash. Ironically it was just before St Patrick’s Day. It took a mammoth crane a relatively short time to demolish a school dating back to 1835 and the time of the Irish Famine... Since then the school has grown and expanded, but although the cranes have flattened it, St Patrick’s school was more than bricks and mortar; it was people and as long as the people are around the nave will live on.

The Growth of the Work

In 1923, three members of the Tribunal set up to inquire into the virtues of Madame d'Houët came to Liverpool to see for themselves 'the growth of the work originally begun in St Patrick's Girls' School, Chester Street'.

In 1894 Monsignor Carr, Vicar-General of the diocese had said 'I am old enough to remember when from Seel Street to Warrington, and from the Docks to Woolton there was no school but St Patrick's.' By 1923 that was no longer the case; indeed by that time, Faithful Companions of Jesus were responsible for schools in four other parishes .

Mount Carmel

In 1873 the Sisters accepted the school of Mount Carmel situated in the neighbourhood of St Patrick. '**Mother Xavier**' (surname unknown, but possibly Collopy) succeeded Miss Elizabeth Fulham who had been preceded by Miss Charlotte Bretherton. There is extant a letter written in 1873 by Mother Mary John Daly (who had left Liverpool and was to join the first band of FCJs going to Australia) which sheds light on the financial situation and reminds us that the foundress had been careful to ensure that her Sisters had some source of income other than what they might get from their work in the Parish Schools.

Whilst she was still in charge of the Liverpool House, Mother Mary John had settled with Father Donnelly with regard to the payment of the Sisters in Mount Carmel

*'He pays £60 for Mother Xavier as he did for Miss Fulham, nothing for **Mother Mary Berchmans**: he offered me £40 for her, this independent of the £60 but considering that as we did not teach the Infants he would thus be at the expense of three mistresses*

(up to our going there he payed only two) Reverend Mother General wished us to leave the assistant mistress free... in speaking of it to me afterwards he expressed his gratitude and his willingness to do something: then I said, 'Well, Father, we will see at the end of the year, when your grant comes, if you can pay all your debts and have something over... at present we will leave it as it is.'

Mount Carmel Parish had been established in an effort to relieve the pressure on St Patrick's. Like its mother parish it was full of crowded courts and cellars in primitive and unsanitary conditions and much that has been said of the work in St Patrick's could be repeated of Mount Carmel, including the same awareness of which Inspectors and/or benefactors and well-wishers were Protestants! The aim was always to instil a deep spirituality but the Sisters knew that grace builds on nature and so the improvement of living conditions, the introduction of colour into otherwise drab lives, the fostering of the arts and the provision of treats all had their part in the scheme of things.

The first FCJ Headmistress of whom anything other than her salary is known was **Mother Lucy Burland** who was born in London in the year of the Foundress' death (1858) and went to school in Somers Town. Having made her religious vows in 1883 she was sent to Great George's Square and was still in Liverpool when the community moved to Bellerive. 'She was so young, so calm, so loving, so full of wisdom and maturity ... she took an interest in each one.' What we know of her, apart from what can be gleaned from the Annals etc., comes from letters of appreciation written after her death at Sedgley in 1929. For example, in Mount Carmel 'she experienced a most trying time owing to the large numbers of children, the few, ever-changing and inexperienced teachers and the wants of the poorly appointed premises in which she worked'.

Pupil Teacher Training

Mention was made in the previous Chapter of the way in which Mother Hilda Fletcher and her predecessors at St Patrick's were responsible for pupil teachers and nuns according to the practice of the times. In 1811 Mother Magdalen Harding arrived in Liverpool as superior and in the words of one letter, 'in a very short time saw that if the pupil were to be taught with any kind of success they would have to live in the Convent. She bought and arranged Number 1 of the Square for their accommodation, classes were formed and taught in the house and a marked difference was soon seen in the attainments of these young girls. The first batch proved very fruitful in vocations and those who entered the Society have done years of gallant service.'

One gathers that there were twelve of these candidates, six of whom became FCJs. Another year there were twenty. Mother Lucy was in charge of their formation. 'She was then a very young Mother, just certified and Mistress of Mount Carmel Girls... She was sweet and serious and dignified and had a great sense of humour... She loved music, art, literature, games but best of all perhaps a contest of wits. Openly pleased at victory, she was not at all discomfited by defeat.'

Mother Lucy was assisted by **Mother Mechtilde Browne**, in the Infants Department. Born in Belfast, March 20th 1870, Mother Mechtilde arrived in Liverpool straight from her novitiate at Ste Anne d'Auray in 1893. She remained a member of the Community till 1937 when, having retired, she moved first to Middlesborough, then to Dublin, then the Hollies and finally back to Bellerive. Despite 18 years of sterling service at Mount Carmel her place is more appropriately in the story of St Malachy's where she was Headmistress 1911-1934.

'The Uneventful Round'

The story of the fifty years 1875-1925 is a touching one including particularly virulent epidemics of measles in 1901 and influenza in 1918 and 1919

when some 30 children died. One six year old boy died on Good Friday, 1911. At 3 p.m. he said to his mother, 'Mother, Our Lord died on Good Friday and I am going to die on the same day; will you sing "By the Blood that flowed from thee..." His mother did and the child passed quietly away at 3:30.'

For those who lived, there were Christmas trees and tea parties; 'pretty presents' for those who returned to-school in good time; new dresses and chemises for those in need. ('My mother says I must pray for the nuns and keep my dress clean for the whole year so as to look nice in school' 1910); in 1911 Coronation halfpence and outings: 'like a well-drilled army the whole school walking four abreast marched to the landing stage where a chartered boat awaited these eager merrymakers'; and in 1919, as part of the Peace Festivities, at 11 a.m. twelve hundred children 'four deep marched to the Park Palace for films, before returning to school for a 'substantial tea' at 2 p.m.'

Inspectors devised new ways of testing knowledge. One HMI 'made them question him, which was very amusing as he several times gave a wrong answer to see if it would puzzle them but they kept to the right thing and showed they were pleased when he gave a correct reply' (1194). In 1913 the Bishop, having confirmed 500, came into school and put Standard I through a novel examination on various sounds made by animals.

Swimming, and diving, was a big feature of life at Mount Carmel. From 1912 onwards the Senior Girls were allowed to the Swimming Baths on Wednesday mornings and soon returned from galas with prizes, medals and certificates. As early as 1912 Mount Carmel Girls were winning scholarships. That year one twelve year old 'won a scholarship for four years free education and the opportunity of entry later for more remunerative scholarships'. The following year records two scholarships for three years in a Secondary School and 45 swimming certificates.

The War Years 1914-1911

One cannot be quite sure whether 'the unique display of drill' the little ones went through during the Superior General's visit in 1914, in which 'they formed a pretty Union Jack', had been part of their Coronation celebrations in 1911 or marked the beginning of their wartime awareness. Whichever it was, the girls threw themselves into helping the troops. They knitted upwards of 200 pairs of men's socks, several helmets, body belts and pairs of mittens . . . In the toe of each sock placed a good piece of boracic lint and a packet of cigarettes. Two letters of thanks from Queen Mary were received'(1914); mufflers, socks, helmets, cigarettes and books were the order of the day in 1915 but by 1916 'wool had grown very expensive and the Education Office refused steel knitting needles'.

Spiritual Life

Devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel and to the Rosary (one decade for the Infants lest five prove too much for them!) is clearly manifest but what is most striking is the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and the implementation of Pius X's directive with regard to Holy communion for children and frequent Communion for all.

In 1910 there were 125 girls making First Holy Communion but in 1911 the number exceeded 700. Fr. Philip Bryan, parish priest, is described as 'zealous' and 'faithful' in carrying out 'the Holy Father's orders'. Daily communion is a feature of the school day, with children either rushing home for breakfast or eating in school. At the Peace Festivities in 1919, upwards of 800 received Holy Communion at the 9 a.m. Mass.

In Mount Carmel the Children of Mary were established as they had been in St Patrick's, but it is the Guild of St Agnes organised in 1911 which catches the eye,

This is a great attraction and all on reaching their 13th birthday seek admission. This we hope will help us to keep a hold on our

girls as they leave school. At 16 these children pass on to the Sodality of the Children of Mary of which we also have charge.

There were many values in this arrangement. In 1916, the Children of Mary, Guild of St Agnes and the Senior Girls in turn organised and carried out successfully a grand tea party.

'We find that placing all responsibility on, and confidence in the president and councillors of the various guilds, has the double vale of drawing members into a closer union with each other, and attaching them more loyally to their own parish and its work.'

By 1918 the Guild of St Agnes was affiliated to Liverpool Union of Girls Clubs. There were two meetings a week—instruction and Benediction on Sunday; and on Wednesday 70 girls between the ages of 14 and 16 would turn up for singing, dancing, millinery, dressmaking, physical drill and boot mending (sic)'. All this thanks to the generosity of teachers and *After Care*.

After Core Committees had been formed in 1917 at both St Patrick's and Mount Carmel. 'The members undertook to visit the girls who have left school and encourage them to frequent the Sacraments and become members of the Girls' Guild.' Mother Hilda had found the result good; the 'girls being those who need a little guidance and who through bad surroundings are in danger of losing their faith or at least becoming careless Catholics. They spend one evening each week in school, where they dance, play games or read books from the Guild Library which they may take away and change at the next meeting'. It was very popular at St Patrick's as well as at Mount Carmel.

The Children of Mary were faithful to their undertakings. In 1917 there was an eight day retreat and 'notwithstanding hard work, late hours and dark streets, these dear girls made every effort to be present at all the exercises'.

‘poorly appointed premises’

Credit should be given to both teachers and pupils for their achievements under what, as early as 1883 were being referred to as the ‘poorly appointed premises of Mount Carmel’. In 1900 the large room had been divided by partitions, in 1917 a grand concert raised £82 in aid of funds towards a new school, the present premises having been condemned, ‘the foundations, in part, having given way one breezy day in March.’ By 1918 there were zigzag cracks in the walls and the three departments worked hard through concerts, raffles, jumble sales to raise a further £300. In 1927 there was a dramatic storm but the Annalist wistfully records that ‘the storm did not hasten the dismantling of the building.’ And still they soldiered on. In 1930, the Lady Mayoress visited all the schools with the Chairman of the Education Committee. The latter was struck by the grimy conditions of walls, ceilings etc. and gave orders that the school should be painted throughout.

The School, nevertheless is still there in 1941—and the Annalist records wryly that whilst St Patrick’s, St Malachy’s, St Charles and St Bernard’s were all affected by bombing ‘only Mount Carmel School, so long condemned, stands without so much as a window broken!’

But the end was nigh! In the summer of 1942 there arrived a telegram forbidding the further use of the school buildings—and Mount Carmel School moved to the premises previously occupied by Dingle Lane Special School. Mother Frances Carroll was Headmistress.

But that is to move beyond 1925.

Mother Magdalen Mathieson

One of those who laboured in these conditions, described after her death as ‘the appalling inconveniences of the very inadequate school building in which she worked’ was Mother Magdalen Mathieson. A pupil at Gt George’s Square, she began as a pupil teacher in Mount

Carmel Girls School in 1884. Having completed 'brilliant' scholarship papers, she went to the Notre Dame Training College on Mount Pleasant in 1887 and fully certificated returned to Mount Carmel only to leave again in 1892 to enter the Society of Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus. She was back at Mount Carmel, this time as Head, in 1909 and remained until 1931.

Mother Magdalen worked with 'untiring energy and devotedness. She never allowed her spirits to droop or her interest to wane', a woman of many parts who took a keen interest in the educational world until her death in 1933.

After her death, Father McGrath asked that her Requiem be held in Mount Carmel Church 'so that those among whom Mother Magdalen had worked so long and so devotedly might be able to pay her their last tribute of love and gratitude'. In his panegyric, he said that her motto seemed to have been 'to spend and be spent in the service of others'. Praising the sterling work 'of one who by long years of service has endeared herself to us all', he emphasised the source of her devotedness: 'Mother Magdalen; Magdalen in name and deed... a true Faithful Companion of Jesus'.

M. Mary Joseph Quish

One lady who went to school at the age of 5, remembers Mother Mary Joseph with affection. 'She was a happy, fresh complexioned nun, always smiling and very caring... She prepared us well for our First Holy Communion. She would be at the 10 a.m. Mass every Sunday and we would occupy the first six benches in front of the Sacred Heart altar. She would stand out in the aisle and we would all join in little prayers before and after Holy Communion. What a wonderful grounding we received; I shall always remember her with grateful thanks for the Faith she passed on. She taught true reverence which is still with me to this day. My daughter also spent her Infant years with Mother at St Finbar's. She was loved then too.' (In 1941 two rooms had been opened in South Hill Road for the

Mount Carmel Infants and Mother Mary Joseph was Head at what later became St Finbar's.

'Holy Childhood' was more commonly known as 'Black Babies'. The same lady remembers 'a large box with a black baby on top and into this went our ha'pennies and at the end of the week, one of us would be the proud wearer of a paper daffodil for being the most generous'. There was also 'a very large picture of Our Lord surrounded by children of every race. She regularly spoke of this. We didn't see any difference in these children only that they were children. No racism there'.

Devotion to the foundress seems to have gone hand-in-hand with the Holy Childhood. In 1929 babies were named 'Marie', 'Madeleine', 'Victoire', 'Eugene' and 'Angele', the last two being the names of Madame d'Houëts son and sister! In 1931 a girl named 'Marie' insisted on talking 'Madeleine Victoire' for confirmation.

The laying of the foundation stone of the Metropolitan Cathedral in 1933 'was a big moment in our lives when chosen girls were taken to the Cathedral site... all clad in our white panama hats (bought specially for the occasion) and navy blazers. How proud we were! It was a glorious day!'

In the following year, 1934, we read that 'Mount Carmel Infants, always up-to-date, have gone 'Back to the Land'—the land being the site of ancient henruns somewhere on the school premises. The initial announcement is full of hope—but there is no further reference to the experiment!'

Mother Frances Carroll

With the outbreak of war, Mount Carmel Schools were evacuated to Sandbach. The lay staff and three Sisters were with them—Mother Mary Joseph, Mother Frances Carroll and Mother Monica Molohan from St Charles.

Mother Mary Frances Carroll was head of the Girls' School 1931-1951. It fell to her lot to move to the Dingle premises in 1942.

Like Mother Mary Joseph, she encouraged the girls to be generous and giving. 'She was very caring of us all. Those of us who had a little more than others, would be taken discreetly on one side and given a verbal message for our mothers to ask for socks or other items of clothing for the less well off. No word was ever spoken about this even though we would see others wearing what we had given. A less in charity.'

In 1948 Archbishop Downey opened the new Mount Carmel Juniors and Infants School but it was not until 1951 that the old blacklisted building was reconditioned and revised. At that time the Senior Boys and Girls were put together under a Headmaster, so that Mother Frances was the last Headmistress at Mount Carmel.

The heartfelt wish, *God be good to them; they worked so hard to bring Our Lord into our lives*, shows how Madame d'Houët's thirst to respond to the thirst of Jesus was still the driving force.

St Malachy's

Like Mount Carmel, St Malachy's initially housed overflow from St Patrick's. It was in fact known for a number of years as 'Robertson Street Relief School' and became 'St Malachy's' in 1905. In 1910 a new Infants School was opened and a further one hundred children were transferred to the spacious building from Mount Carmel School.

In many ways the circumstances of St Malachy's Girls School mirror those of the other two schools—poverty and overcrowding. Up to 1913 'the plea of insufficient playground space hitherto caused the Education Committee to refuse (any) increase to our numbers, but our proximity

to a large public playground, added to our own large one on the roof has overcome the difficulty.’

Mother Mechtilde Browne

Mother Mechtilde who had been on the Staff of Mount Carmel Infants became Headmistress of the Girls School from 1911-1934. At the time of her death in 1961, a week before her 91st birthday, it was said that ‘she trained and loved almost every grandmother in the parish and many of the mothers. Her name was, and still is, a household word and many are the stories of her kindness to the poor, her firmness with Inspectors and the perfection of the needlework produced by those she taught’. In an area where the unemployment rate was high she gave herself completely to the spiritual and material welfare of the children. She begged from the rich and she herself made hundreds of underclothes, dresses and pinafores which she gave or sold at a nominal price. As long as was necessary she would go to the school on Christmas Day and provide breakfast for those in need. The affection in which she was held was revealed when she returned to Bellerive in 1957, having been away for over twenty years, and her former pupils were delighted to see her back.

The new school obviously had to be paid for. Bazaars, concerts, tea-parties, penny concerts and Sales of Work all played their part in helping Fr McKinley pay off the debt.

Meanwhile in the school, girls were ‘busy making many useful garments, the hum of the machine during needlework class was a source of particular interest to those who had not yet had the privilege of using it’ (1912); staff realised the necessity of commencing formal grammar lessons (1916); and as early as 1919 one girl won a free place to Mount Pleasant Training College and another to the recently opened New Central Classes, for Senior there was a course of Cinematograph Films each Friday afternoon, which were of ‘great benefit as pictorial illumination of their Geography course’ (1924). Once the heating apparatus was out of order and the teachers did their utmost ‘to keep the children warm

by running them round the playground and passages but finally we had to close for a week'(1918). In 1913 when King George V and Queen Mary came to Liverpool the school children assembled at Goodison Park: 'Each school chose a flower—ours a purple iris—the girls in rush hats, trimmed with mauve and carrying their flowers in their hands, made a pretty group on the field where the children greeted their Majesties by waving their floral emblem.'

Like the other parishes, St Malachy's had their distinctive devotions. In 1912 there was erected in school a 'beautiful statue of the Sacred Heart Pleading'; in 1924 the May procession was a living rosary, the girls wearing wreaths of a 'beautiful shade of blue', symbolic red and gold. Again in 1927 when the statue of Our Lady was carried through the streets there was a living rosary.

In 1930 there was no outdoor procession because of the 'excessive poverty'. Earlier several children had lost fathers and brothers on the Lusitania (1915); others lost relatives as well as classmates from influenza, but through each year's story runs a note of faith and trust. One child in 1914 gave his sole ha'penny to the Archbishop's Fund; the RE examiner in 1918 offered special praise for the manner in which the children said their prayers and in 1916 'the Headmistress of a large Council School just opposite St Malachy's... was amazed at the differences between her children and ours and could not understand how it could be so. She evidently did not realise the part Religion plays and the respect always shown by our poor children to the Religious Habit.'

The children were on the roofed playground when the first sirens sounded from the river, proclaiming the armistice in 1918—and the following year the Liverpool Education Committee gave the school £50 for Peace Celebrations.

Mother Mechtilde was succeeded by **Mother Vincent Gargan** (1934-1960) and **Mother Stanislaus O'Brien** was with her as an assistant Teacher (1938-1954). When the second world war came arrangements were made for St Malachy's Infants to go to Betws-y-Coed; the Boys to Holyhead and the Girls to Denbigh but many preferred to go as family groups. The two FCJs went to Denbigh but by Christmas 1939 most of the children had returned to Liverpool and by early 1940 Schools were re-opened. Despite having to wait until 1943 for repairs to one side of the school badly wrecked by blast, lessons continued between school and shelter. The Nativity Play of 1942 was remarkable for the way in which enthusiasm overcame difficulties and ingenuity produced costumes. Nativity Plays were always a high point at St Malachy's—in 1944 there were two public performances of Benson's Nativity Play in aid of the School Building Fund, which was repeated the following year. In 1946 the play chosen was Mgr Gonne's '*In the City of David*' and the production went 'on tour' to Crompton, near Widnes. In 1948 and 1949 the school play was '*The Message of Fatima*' (in the Marian Year 1954 the CYMS carried the statue of Our Lady of Fatima through the streets whilst the rosary was recited en route). In 1950 '*The Upper Room*' was produced and in 1953 '*The Finding of the King*', when the speech, movement, dress, singing and earnestness of the actresses were all praised.

With the raising of the Leaving Age in 1947, pre-fabs were needed. Two extra classrooms and a Housecraft Room were provided in Darnley Street—up to this, St Malachy's Girls had used St Patrick's facilities for Cookery.

Another FCJ who served as Assistant Teacher around this time was **Mother Frances Keane** (1954-1967). She thoroughly enjoyed teaching and had a great love of children as well as a natural aptitude for dealing with the very young.

The Sedgley Plain Song Festival was always one of the major events of the school year—and St Malachy's invariably sent two choirs. One suspects there was rivalry among these neighbouring schools and in 1952 when the Festival 'unexpectedly turned out to be a competitive one' there was great rejoicing when St Malachy's won the bronze medal. This success was repeated in later years. At other times they went to the Liverpool Musical Festival, sang at concerts organised by the Knights of St Columba, and with the Catholic Teachers' Choir.

Devotion to the Mass was clearly a characteristic of the school. It is told of Mother Mechtilde that as Head, she used to visit each class in turn and impart her own love of the Mass to the Pupils. By 1950 when twenty-five girls with two teachers went to Sunday Mass in Keswick, whilst camping in the Lake District, they were 'themselves able to answer as there was no server'; by 1955 Dialogue Mass was an accepted part of school life; in 1962 in an effort to emphasise the importance of Sunday Mass over and above the attractions of the May procession, the crowning of Our Lady took place before the Sunday morning Mass; and that same year, during November, the practice of a 4 p.m. Thursday Mass was introduced. Attendance was good and attention reverent, 'in spite of after school weariness'. Two years later Friday noon Masses were started and on the anniversary of confirmation, nearly the whole school received Holy Communion at a Mass of the Holy Ghost said specially for them.

Liturgical change was not the only outward sign of changing times. In 1957 the school was painted and changed its colour scheme 'from drab . brown to mushroom pink and steel grey walls and maroon doors.'

Mother **Cuthbert Heaton** (1960-1967) succeeded Mother Vincent, with **Mother Marie Therese Atkinson** (1961-1963) also on the staff. Handmaids of the Blessed Sacrament numbered some 130 members; 'Leadership Courses for Leavers' at the Cenacle took the place of the

earlier retreats and the Guild of Maria Goretti flourished.

Remembering how earlier Heads had been aware of the subtle differences between Catholic and Protestant, it is interesting to see that the 1960s marked the beginning of a gradual rapprochement in that 'Catholic and non-Catholic children from five local schools' attended lectures together on the main problems confronting School Leavers today.

St Malachy's Girls School came to an end in 1965 when the Seniors went to a new secondary school, St Winifred's. Although Sister Veronica Hayes remained as Head (1967-1971), then as class teacher (1971-1981) and finally in a voluntary capacity doing remedial work until 1981, the Mass of Thanksgiving for all the blessings bestowed on St Malachy's since its foundation was seen as an official good-bye both to the Leavers and to the Faithful Companions of Jesus who had 'laboured so bravely so hopefully and so successfully to form the older girls to Christian womanhood'.

St Bernard's, St Charles', St Clare's

Three other schools were also entrusted to FCJ Heads—St Bernard's (1194-1955); St Charles' (1898-1955) and St Clare's (1901-1932). Although the environments and economic situation in these schools differed from those of St Patrick's, Mount Carmel and St Malachy's the basic aims remained the same.

On a plaque in St Bernard's Church are recorded the names of two FCJs—**Mother Melanie Flynn** who was Head 1890-1918 and **Mother Winefride Doherty**. The former retired through ill-health at the end of 1918 after twenty-seven and a half years of service in St Bernard's and died early the following year. At her Funeral Mass, in St Bernard's Church, the Infants sang hymns which she had taught them.

Collections for the new church (built c. 1900); epidemics of measles which claimed deaths among the children (1901-3); two First Communion Days a year, Confirmation of 230 in 1912 and 132 in 1916; May Crowning when the Queen had three little pages and six Maids of Honour (1913); parcels for the Front and collections for Belgian refugees during the war and an outing in September 1915 when 'the older children drove in wagonettes to a large meadow in the country' and a week without school because of heavy frost and snow—no more than these disturbed what the Annalist of 1894 had called 'the monotony of their daily life'.

Serving even longer than Mother Melanie was **Mother Monica Tansey**, who for 33 years taught in the 'Baby Room' at St Bemard's. An excellent Infants Teacher with a natural gift for training little ones, her methods apparently were quite unique and often amusing, but they produced the desired results and pleased Inspectors. Her death in 1951 was announced in nearly every church in Liverpool, so many knew her. Girls coming to Bellerive on the following days were several times asked by bus conductors and people on the street whether the Mother Monica 'given out in Church' was the one who used to teach at St Bernard's. 'My word, she was good to me' and 'She was such a kind little nun', were tributes frequently paid.

Mother Winefride Doherty succeeded Mother Melanie as Head (1918-1924). St Bernard's was not the longest assignment of her life and eventually she went out to Rhode Island when St Philomena's School was opening in Portsmouth, taking with her a wealth of experience, an incurable optimism and an abiding love of music and drama.

Whether it was Mother Monica or Mother Winefride we don't know, but in 1919 when there 280 on the roll, (100 for confirmation and 50 for First Communion) 'we approached the Education Committee and obtained permission to include Organised Games on the Timetable and play them in Princes Park.

Mother Frances Kennedy (1924-1938) celebrated her 100th birthday in 1973. The Headmaster of St Bernard's went to Bellerive to offer his congratulations and there was a giant window box of flowers from the pupils some of whom were very happy to say to her 'My granny said you taught her!'

After Mother Frances came **Mother Ethelburga Drew** (1938-1955) remembered still as being 'graciousness itself'. She devoted herself wholeheartedly to the care of her pupils and to the instruction of converts in the evenings. A prayerful, gentle, attractive woman.

From 1951 onwards two new features of school life emerge—one the tradition of a procession for Mothers and babies and toddlers at 1:30 p.m. on December 8th and the other an influx of children of different nationalities—Poles, Italians, Greeks were three of seven nationalities in the group receiving Holy Communion for the first time in 1952.

At St Charles where Mother Paula Kennedy was in charge from 1898 to 1911, there is frequent mention of entrainments for the elderly in the care of the Little Sisters of the Poor (in 1908 a band of old men, veterans of the Crimea, provided entertainment in return, with a tin whistle, a violin and a drum); of outdoor Corpus Christi processions and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and of children sharing clothing, toys and books with others poorer than themselves. When Archbishop Whiteside came to the school in 1912 the children brought choice flowers, plants and carpets to decorate the rooms—and for their part in the royal welcome at Goodison, St Charles chose sunflowers. During World War I there were 24 refugee children in school and in 1916 an Old Boy—'the darling of his old school', was killed instantly in action, aged 20. The following year brought the deaths of six more, and when the belongings of one came home to his parents, they included a little blue and white rosary he had received years before from Reverend Mother on his First Communion Day.

Mother Veronica Neylan (1911-1924) had obtained her diploma L.L. A-Lady Literate in Arts—a qualification offered by St Andrew's to women excluded from the universities. From all accounts she was a somewhat powerful Headmistress and both in St Charles' and later in St Mary's in Paisley, kept firm control. A woman of great integrity she demanded integrity from others. Hers was to be a long life—she died in 1914, just short of her 106th birthday.

Like the other schools, St Charles' knew what it was like to be short of space. In 1926 the pupils took possession of much improved and extended premises. In spite of the kindness which had been shown to them at the local Council School where many had been accommodated, teachers and children were delighted to be at home once more, especially since the playground had been asphalted.

By that time **Mother Monica Molohan** was in charge and her time at St Charles extended to the outbreak of World War II and evacuation. Born in County Clare, Mother Monica qualified as a teacher at Mount Pleasant before joining the Society. In school she was known for her 'motherly care' which did much to sustain the morale of evacuated children whose home lives were seriously upset by air-raids and very often by tragic news from the war zones. With the children and staff from Mount Carmel, St Charles' were seven months in Sandbach, and Mother Monica was busily occupied caring for children, many of whom were too young to realise why they were where they were.

Mother Monica was followed by **Mother Philippa Mayston** (1942-1955) who throughout her life gave herself without stint. Dynamic, multi-talented, enthusiastic and deeply spiritual, a lady of wit, humour and good fun, she went with the first group of Sisters to Sierra Leone in 1979 and died on Christmas Day 1985.

Biographical details of the women entrusted with the Headship of St Clare's are sadly lacking. When in 1901 the Sisters took charge of the Elementary School at the request of Father Crook, who was both Parish Priest and chaplain at the Convent, **Mother Scholastica Brady** was in charge and except for two years when she was in Melbourne, Australia, 1922-1924 and was replaced by **Mother Stanislaus Mather**, she remained in office until she retired in 1929. **Mother Gertrude Worrall** was then Head until 1931 when the Sisters withdrew from St Clare's.

A comparatively small school, mixed throughout, St Clare's seems to have been a happy place. Its position put it in close proximity to the Royal Agricultural Society Show and this ensured a good view of the Airship (1916). Picnics to Southport; entertainments for the old people at Little Sisters of the Poor; an afternoon brimful of enjoyment at the Liverpool Exhibition (1913), all brought their own joy.

Past pupils loved to come back; one from Cook's Tour Offices gave an interesting Geographical lecture on different pleasure routes, another from the Royal Navy who had worked alongside the Prince of Wales, gave a graphic account of his work. During World War I when Old Boys—some still as young as 16—died fighting, others 'soldiers, sailors and aviators' came to school—one from the battleship '*Triumph*' mined in the Dardanelles—and there was a holiday when one won the Military Medal.

Netball trophies and trips to Preston to play against St Augustine's Girls' (beaten away, triumphant at home); scholarships, vocation—Old Boys going to Upholland, Ushaw and Bishop Eton—play, work and prayer were all presupposed at St Clare's.

In some cases records are incomplete—sometimes it is difficult to assign various Sisters who taught as Assistant Mistresses to appropriate schools; at other times one could wish more details had been left for our delight—but surely one may deduce that the members of the Tribunal would have been well satisfied in 1923 with the development of the work begun in 1844.

Bellerive

Growth of the School

In 1844 an advertisement appeared in the Catholic Directory ‘respectfully informing the catholic Public’ of a Religious Institution established in Liverpool for the education of Young Ladies. The Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus, offered instruction in ‘Geography, Use of the Globes, Botany, History, Writing, Arithmetic and the French and Italian languages... All sorts of Useful and Ornamental Needlework, Embroidery etc. ... French is chiefly spoken in the house’.

The foundress wished to establish a boarding school in Liverpool partly as a means of financing the work amongst the poor in the city and partly as a means ‘of doing good among those who would be in a position to influence others later on.’ This school was started at Number 3, Gt George’s Square but by 1896 so engulfed was it by hotels for immigrants that parents were growing reluctant to send their daughters to it. The Sisters sought a new house and found, situated in Princess Park: surrounded by large gardens, a beautiful house called ‘Bellerive’.

On the 14th September, they raised their cross in their new chapel. Bishop Whiteside blessed the house from attic to cellar, gave Benediction and allowed Exposition for three days to draw down spiritual blessings on their new home. By the end of the week the move was completed and the Sisters welcomed six new children to the school which was now called ‘Bellerive’.

The school grew steadily. After only two years more sleeping accommodation was needed, so ‘when cottages and stables adjoining their land became vacant, the Sisters asked to rent them. Much haggling through Mr. Yates, a most helpful solicitor, and many fervent prayers were needed to obtain a lease on reasonable terms.

Catholic religious were not universally welcomed at that time! Not only did the Sisters now have more room for boarders, they were also able to keep hens and were soon admiring the first brood of Bellerive chickens!

Even greater expansion took place in 1906 when Culmore was purchased and it was there that the first of many Fancy Dress Balls took place—events which the Sisters believed helped the Boarders overcome their homesickness. The services of Mr. Yatcs were needed again in 1908 when it was decided to build a passage way between Bellerive and Culmore. A litigious neighbour raised many objections; she had no wish to see Religious Sisters moving across Windermere Terrace. Consequently after consultations with the Park Committee and the Health Committee, and then the intervention of an influential parent, the construction of an underground passage was sanctioned.

It is interesting to note that despite the bigotry which surrounded them, the Sisters, few of whom were English, were anxious to encourage loyalty in their pupils. A holiday was given in gratitude for the Relief of Ladysmith and the day was made as pleasant as possible ‘to encourage an instinct of loyalty’. Many prayers were offered for Queen Victoria on her death. The Sisters believed that because she had been favourable to Catholics she had made loyalty instinctive in them.

Reading about those early years of Bellerive one is very conscious of the way the school mirrors the times. Disease and consequent child mortality were rife. In November 1906 a five year old Day Girl died of diphtheria. Immediately all Day Girls were told to remain at home. Medical officers examined the school and found everything ‘satisfactory’. The Boarders took many long walks especially to the shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour at Bishop Eton. The Sisters were most devoted in the care they gave and the prayers they said. All seemed well until November 29th when a Boarder showed symptoms of the disease.

Hers proved only a slight attack but sadly a second girl died.

War too had its effect on Bellerive, although it seems strange that at its outbreak the only anxiety shown by the Sisters had to do with numbers! 'The troublous conditions or the time made us anxious about September's reopening but new children came to fill the places of the old ones and many who had been preparing to leave were, in the merciful designs of Providence, destined to remain longer.' Soon, however, to the school as to the country at large, the tragedy of the conflict became clear. The Cuban consul, father of three pupils, was very nearly drowned when the *Lusitania* sank. He was rescued dressed only in night clothes and insisted on presenting himself to his daughters still thus clad so that they might fully appreciate his ordeal. The South American brother of two other pupils was imprisoned in Germany for a year, and then when he managed to travel to Liverpool to collect his sisters, he had much trouble from the English authorities.

Peace brought a fervour of patriotic rejoicing among the children. After the war the school's steady growth continued and now the Fisher Education Act meant that a Board of Inspectors had to be invited to the school. They were very thorough, but sympathetic and friendly. All must have been well, for in 1921 Bcllerive was granted Recognition Status and received its first grant from the Board of Education.

Now the numbers had increased so much that accommodation was pressed to its limits and in 1922 Reverend Mother Philomena Higgins, Superior General, sanctioned the purchase of Silvermere with its '30 spacious rooms and a billiard room which could be turned into a drill hall'. The school was completely re-organised. Silvermere was to be used entirely as a teaching base for the Senior pupils, Culmore for the Juniors and Bellerive as dormitories for all ages. Thus even the Boarders had

a sense of going home at the end of the day. And they could practise their music 'at home' for the music rooms stayed in Bellerive. Miss Archibald HMI expressed complete satisfaction with everything that was done. By 1932 further extensions were needed; the billiard room had not been large enough, so a new Drill Hall / Concert Hall was built onto Silvermere.

'I can see Mother Winefride Mary exercising Sheila, the dog.' So wrote one young lady in 'From our Classroom Window' for the school magazine of 1926. Apart from her years at Eshton during World War II, **Mother Winefride Craven** spent her whole religious life at Bellerive, for the most part in charge of Boarders' linen room and dormitory. Old Girls remembered her gentleness and the patience with which she met the frequent demands on her time and energy, and what they experienced as her untiring devotedness to them in their every need.

The School was not however, untouched by the Depression: 'Because of the financial difficulties of the times, there was no Sale of Work in November.'

More positively there was the opening of the Mersey Tunnel to attend and for the Coronation of George VI each class decorated its room in red, white and blue.

War, however, was looming and throughout 1939 there had been lectures on First Aid and Air Raid Precautions. Plans were afoot for evacuation and sadly, in September, they had to be put into operation. One hundred day pupils, four Sisters and six Mistresses left for Chester. The children were boarded out with families but attended lessons from their own teachers at Dee House Convent School, where they were made most welcome. This welcome was not, however, universal; some children suffered at the hands of prejudiced hosts. Two were refused any alternative to meat on

Fridays and were sent to the back kitchen to contemplate for hours the sausages they bravely refused to eat.

Perhaps it was such incidents that led to the decision to re-open the school in Liverpool for day pupils after Christmas holidays. Virtually all parents signed declarations that they wanted this. The Boarders had already been transferred to Skipton. There being surplus space, Silvermere was rented to the Committee for Czechoslovakian refugees.

Bellerive did not escape the enemy bombing of Liverpool. On the night of September 3rd 1940 incendiary bombs set fire to the roofs of Bellerive and Culmore, while a high explosive bomb blasted the Garage next door and blew out many Bellerive windows. Despite this, school was ready to re-open by the middle of September and numbers were only slightly down. Lessons now took place alternately in class rooms and air raid shelters. It was with much rejoicing and many prayers of thanksgiving that the school greeted the end of the conflict.

1944 saw another change in the nature of Bellerive. There was no immediate attempt to re-open the Boarding School but application was made successfully for Direct Grant status. This meant that Bellerive Convent Grammar School began to take an ever increasing number of 'scholarship' pupils. Numbers again increased and in 1947 Reverend Mother General sanctioned the buying of Elmfield. By September 1948 the new premises were ready for the 423 pupils attending Bellerive.

The following year the Boarding School was re-opened but already the habit of sending girls away to school was dying and the numbers of Boarders never again matched those of 1939. Twelve years later it was decided to concentrate solely on the Day School.

Meanwhile Science laboratories were installed on the top floor of Elmfield and those staying to study both Arts and Sciences in the VI Form numbered 54 by 1944.

The country had a new monarch and when Queen Elizabeth visited Liverpool in 1954, Bellerive's Head Girl was presented to her, yet another sign of the weakening prejudice against Catholics. A rather more homely sign of this was that throughout the years of rationing the FCJ Sisters had been feeding bones to the dog belonging to the Anglican nuns who were their neighbours. On the dog's death its owners wrote to say that clearly Bellerive bones were more tasty than their own for he always wished to make his way to their 'sister convent'!

The expansion to three form entry in 1962 put yet more pressure on accommodation. On the Elmfield site in 1963 a new block was built to provide kitchens and a dining hall, above which was a Domestic Science area and when in 1967 the Anglican nuns moved, the Superior General, Mother Raphael Conran decided that the Society should buy St Gabriel's Convent for the use of the Community, thus making the whole Bellerive building available for the Grammar School. Very reluctantly the decision was also taken to close the Preparatory School so that Culmore too was taken over by the Senior School.

Two dearly loved Sisters who had had charge of the Preparatory Department were **Mother Annunciata McDonnell** (1940-1955) and **Mother Anthony Rodgers** (1959-1967). 'Come to my arms, you bundle of charms'—Mother Annunciata's familiar greeting to any child who had been away ill. On one occasion a child was found crying at home because 'Nancy Tar' (Annunicata1) had failed to welcome her back with the familiar words! No doubt the omission was rectified next day! Many today still remember shaking hands morning and evening with Mother Annunciata and having their hats straightened and their gloves smoothed out!

Like **Mother Winifred MacLeod** before her in the 1920s, Mother Annunciata found great joy in the preparation of children for first Holy Communion—a day which seems always to have been a highlight of the Prep year. Mass was celebrated in the Convent chapel and breakfast served in the School Library. Nor did these Mothers lose contact with the little ones when they retired. Until her death in 1961 Mother Winifred continued to receive letters and visits from those whom she had taught and Mother Anthony, who never lost her sense of humour, continued to supervise the playground and dining until the Prep school closed.

As for **Mother Blanche Seymour**, who was at Bellerive 1926-1967, there was no-one who didn't love her. Cheerful, gentle, obliging, with a wicked sense of humour and unfailing generosity in using her notable talents (graphic art, embroidery, flower arranging) for the benefit of all, in later years her own physical frailty brought out gentleness and kindness in the girls who loved to help her in her work as Sacristan or in her link green house where she tended plants which would be used for chapel or for Masses in the gym. There are still many who remember her dark, twinkling eyes, set in a face as white as her name! Mother Blanche taught Art in the Grammar School and designed and made costumes and scenery for school plays throughout the school.

Bellerive was responding to new challenges in the community. Youth clubs were becoming very popular and six old girls answered Archbishop Heenan's plea to ex-grammar schools pupils to train for Youth Leadership.

Tragically other signs of the times were also touching Bellerive. Again the premature deaths of pupils were noted; one was knocked down by a lorry and died instantly, another sustained horrifying injuries when she was riding pillion on her boy friend's motor bike. Eventually she too died. Cancer also claimed its victims from among the pupils, as did viral pneumonia. In every case the girls grieved deeply but put

their trust in the ultimate mercy of God, attending the Requiem Masses of their friends and offering their prayers.

The Sisters wanted to ensure that the girls were able to play an informed part in the political life of the nation so in 1970 representatives of the three main parties addressed older pupils in advance of the General Election. Also in the '70s the school celebrated the Queen's Silver Jubilee: a larch tree was planted in Silvermere garden and amongst many other activities, Sefton Park was cleared of litter! Pupils and Staff also feasted right royally on an enormous cake.

In 1971, to meet the demands of an ever growing VI form, an extension was built onto the dining hall block at Elmfield in which were installed Science Laboratories and a Lecture Theatre. The Community also made Mount St Joseph's available to be turned into VI Form Common Room and teaching areas.

Thus magnificently equipped the school continued to go from strength to strength until 1983 when again in response to the changing needs of the times, the Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus agreed to amalgamate Bellerive's pupils and buildings with four other schools to form a new school St Mary's R.C. High School, a comprehensive school established to serve the girls of the immediate neighbourhood. **Sister Mary Gabriel Barron** had been on the Staff at Bellerive since 1959 and Headmistress since 1968. She was therefore at the helm at this challenging time and remained Head of St Mary's until 1991.

The final term was a time of excitement and sadness. A most enjoyable entertainment was prepared by the Staff which delighted—and amused—the pupils. A huge cake was baked for the farewell party. Last but not least, a Mass of celebration for the work of Bellerive was held in the Cathedral, Bishop Hitchen presiding.

What was it that was celebrated

A successful school certainly but in what sense successful?

In that first advertisement the Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus, had offered academic instruction.

As early as 1900, Sisters and Lay Teachers sat examinations in chemistry. In 1912 when Archbishop Whiteside visited Bellerive, he was surprised to find gooseberries on his desk; they were for use in a Botany lesson. In the school magazine of 1928 one FCJ wrote enthusiastically of the careers open to educated women: architecture, law (N.B. the first woman was called to the bar in 1922), social work, medicine, teaching, massage, medical gymnastics, poultry farming, music and art to name but a few. Not surprisingly, when in 1946, the Annual Art and Needlework Exhibition was accompanied by Bellerive's first Careers' talk, the Old Girls who spoke were variously doctor, almoner, social worker, librarian, sister tutor, hairdresser and university student. Each stressed the special role of the Catholic Woman in her chosen field. Clearly pupils were being prepared for examinations and passing them! From Oxford Locals at the turn of the Century to 'O' and 'A' levels in the 1910s the pupils did well and the Sisters rejoiced that their prayers and their hard work had borne fruit.

Vignettes of two FCJs who died whilst teaching at Bellerive shed light on the spirit of the school. After only one term, **Mother Augustine O'Brien** died on December 30th 1926. Concerned not only for the pupils' studies, their singing and their sports, Mother Augustine was 'keenly enthusiastic about the Girl Guides.' It is perhaps no wonder that though she was there for such a short time, Eileen McMahon writing in the School Magazine for 1927 could say that 'we had all learned to love and admire her.'

Mother **Barbara O'Callaghan** had been a child at Bellerive and spent nearly all her religious life there. Already in community from 1912-1919, she was appointed boarders' class-mistress in 1922 and was much

loved for her sympathetic interest in each one. Described as being full of life and energy, it was said of her that she never forgot any one and certainly she seems to have been unstinting in her self-giving and service. In 1929 she began to suffer a series of heart attacks but continued in school until the end of the Christmas term 1933. She died on February 16th 1934 but her name was well known to later FCJs, thanks to the frequently expressed appreciation of Mother Mechtilde Browne.

A series of Head Mistresses built on the foundations and traditions laid in earlier days. In the 1930s **Mother Theresa Murray** who had gained her B.A from London as early as 1916, was forced to withdraw because of premature deafness; then came Mother Joseph McCorry and **Mother Emmaneul Scarisbrick**, in the opinion of some, 'the making of Bellerive'. Under a stern exterior she hid a kind heart as witnessed by her thoughtfulness in winter time of emptying all the little bottles of milk into a huge double boiler and making hot chocolate for the whole school at Break. Very keen on academic standards, 'Emma' as she was affectionately known, 'thought big' in all spheres of Bellerive life, whether it was Gilbert and Sullivan productions, curriculum development or religious education. Mothers of many of the students found her a ready listener and a great help.

Then came **Mother Gabriel Conran**, (1959-1968), later Sister Una Mary, a dynamic Head who did much to move the school forward, enabling it to serve the needs of pupils now coming from a wider catchment area. Despite many difficulties, the Home Economics Room and the Dining Room were built in the early 1960s and one of her first major initiatives was the provision of Science labs at Elmfield. She not only appointed staff to teach Science to A-level but she appointed the first male member of staff. Another innovation under Mother Gabriel's leadership was the public prize day—held initially in St George's Hall Building and then at the Philharmonic Hall. Thanks to her six-day timetable, she could enter

the staff room on a Monday and deliver such lines as ‘since last Friday was Tuesday, today is Wednesday!’ Education is not merely a matter of academic success. Music was always encouraged as were Art and Needlework. We read that in 1896 Reverend Mother General was ‘pleased and entertained’ by the Music and Singing, while in 1969 Archbishop Beck ‘could not praise highly enough’ the performance of Britten’s *Let’s Make an Opera* and Bellerive’s last production was a version of Mozart’s *Magic Flute*. Yearly there were exhibitions of most creative needlework and art. As early as 1926 a pupil won a studentship to Liverpool School of Art while in 1969 paintings were hung in the Walker Art Gallery’s Exhibition *‘What is Freedom?’*

Sporting activities were also encouraged. In 1895 a set of ‘cricket’ (sic) was purchased and this was ‘much approved by those who advocate plenty of healthy outdoor exercise for girls.’ Little by little, tennis and netball courts were added to the school’s amenities. There was much rejoicing when in 1937 Bellerive won the local schools’ netball shield. This was a triumph to be repeated many times. Athletics too grew in popularity and by the 1960s Bellerive girls were participating regularly in the Catholic International Games—and winning medals.

Travelling was always seen as important, both in this country and abroad. To pick two years at random: in 1896 a day was spent in Chester visiting the Cathedral, the Duke of Westminster’s conservatories and sailing on the Dee, while in 1971 parties went to the Loire Valley, to Ireland and North Wales, this last trip being made in the school’s new mini-bus.

Such travels were but an extension of the picnics undertaken annually to Burbo House, Blundelsands which obviously gave tremendous delight to pre-war pupils and for which St Joseph seems always to have provided good weather!

Outsiders were always coming to Bellerive to provide instruction and entertainment, from the parents and priests who gave magic lantern shows early this century to Professor Brooke from Liverpool University who gave a lecture on Medieval History in 1960.

This latter was, of course, at the invitation of **Sister Cecily Rixon**, herself a keen and able historian who had gained her MA in 1930. A powerful intellectual force and a compelling personality, she was more likely to inspire awe than confidence on first acquaintance, but as one's knowledge of Sister Cecily developed so also did one's appreciation! As Head of Department at Bellerive, she introduced the girls to a syllabus of medi-aeval history which she had devised herself with the full approval of the Examining Board and the local inspectors. Her students undoubtedly learned history from Sister Cecily but they also learned the more abiding truths and a chance to share the Christian commitment which informed her whole life. In the years following Vatican II her keen musical appreciation, quickened and inspired by the Council, was put at the service of the liturgy. A spontaneous standing ovation in the Philharmonic Hall from pupils, staff and parents was a token of the esteem and affection with which she was regarded when she retired in 1973.

If to all this we add the many plays staged or witnessed, the concerts attended, the Art Galleries and historical monuments visited is it any wonder that praise for Bellerive education echoes across the years? An HMI who opened the new Science Laboratories in 1954 said she was the more able to appreciate the fine work done in Bellerive since she could compare it with that in other schools she had visited. There was also the report following a General Inspection which spoke of '*the quiet business-like attitude, the lack of rigidity and above all the happy atmosphere.*'

Spiritual Growth

Which brings us to the most important success of all. Bellerive was a happy school and that happiness derived from the spirit of the Society of

Faithful Companions of Jesus, a by-product of their own deep spirituality and of the spiritual values they strove to pass onto their pupils. The loving service they offered to the poor in Liverpool was shared by the girls in Bellerive. We read of Boarders still in school for Christmas 1900 who helped the Sisters give breakfast to parishioners of St Patrick's. One was so horrified by the rags she saw being worn that she took off her own cloak and stockings to give away. Seventy-five years later, Bellerive VI formers were making up and delivering parcels to the poor of local parishes. When girls donated altar linen to a Mission in Uganda, the priest wrote to tell them 'they shared intimately in the priesthood of those whose hands carried the Sacred Host'.

Much of the charitable work was very practical. In 1967 many girls worked hard helping prepare a new Cheshire home. Once it was opened, members of the Legion of Mary regularly visited patients. In the 1970s, VI formers frequently gave parties to orphans or to elderly people. The singing and laughter heard at these events gave ample proof of enjoyment. Even fund-raising could be fun: in 1938 an American Tea with various side shows was the main source of income for the Good Shepherd Fund. It was, however, the simple voluntary giving by their 'dear girls' which most delighted the Sisters. Look at the record for any year and the girls were showing that 'spirit or generosity' at which one Liverpool Archbishop after another marvelled.

This service of others was rooted in the steady worship of God which lay deep at the centre of the school. The manner of that worship changes with the changes in the Church but never the essence of it.

Every year the retreat was a most significant event. For decades this meant a time of silence in which to contemplate the wisdom of what was preached and to find a way to respond to it. It is tempting to laugh at the story of two sisters who in 1926 refused to break that silence to talk to their old nurse who had come to visit them but perhaps instead

we should marvel at their steadfastness. Silent Retreats were replaced by the exuberance of Missions given (in the 1970s) by teams of Franciscans or by a group of priests, brothers and sisters, known as 'The Caring Church'. These experiences proved great times of renewal and inspiration.

The outward approach to the Mass also changed over the years. In 1964, Mass was said by a Divine Word Missionary to help prepare the pupils for the new liturgy. In 1969 the then school chaplain taught some of the pupils to accompany Mass on guitars. Essentially he was doing what a visiting Benedictine had done fifty years earlier when he taught the girls plainsong. At one time all school Masses had been for the whole school community; but in 1974 there were also Class Masses being held regularly which enabled large numbers of girls to be very active participants. These did not replace but supplemented the annual Mass of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the School year.

Annually, too, there was a ceremony to celebrate the Immaculate Conception of Mary, a feast very dear to the Society of FCJ. Its form changed: sometimes there were processions to every statue of Our Lady in the school, sometimes there was Benediction, sometimes Mass, but always there was the declaration of belief in this mystery: *Oui, je le crois!* For many Old Girls this came to symbolise all that Bellerive had meant to them.

Visits and letters from Old Girls have been countless and always they recall the tremendous influence upon them of the Sisters. When they were ill, the Sisters nursed them with devoted kindness; if any were bereaved the Sisters comforted them. Sister Cecily had inspired generations with her absorbing love of history; Sister Barbara before her had taught Maths and the unique importance of every individual; Two very different stories will perhaps illustrate something of what these faithful women gave to the children in their care. In 1900 two boarders aged 4 and 6 had been beseeching the Infant Jesus to put it

into the head of Reverend Mother General to give them each a doll when she visited Bellerive. Sure enough, on the second day of her visit, the gifts were made, thus comforting two home-sick little ones. Eighty years later a woman who declared that no-one would want to see her because she had never done anything worthwhile, called nonetheless at the Convent. Her life was in pieces, and in desperate need of 'someone to forgive her', she had known she could turn to those Sisters to whom 'she had never been anything but trouble.'

Is it any wonder that happier women came with their new husbands to leave their wedding bouquets in the Convent Chapel, that in 1960 one Old Girl asked to have her long-awaited first child baptised there, that another mother christened her son Francis Cuthbert Joseph?

Perhaps the last tribute should be that of an Old Boy, a pupil of the Preparatory school and later a Jesuit priest: 'I owe so much to the simple yet profound spiritual instruction I received in Bellerive. I find how much of the Catechism I learnt with Mother Annunciata is my last line of defense in theological difficulties.'

Surely we can say that Bellerive succeeded in educating 'those who would be in a position to influence others later on.' It has also been a source of vocations. Bellerive sent young women to serve God as consecrated religious and its daughters have shown themselves called to serve God in His world as dedicated and devoted lay women.

There was indeed much success to celebrate at the Mass in 1983 which marked the official closing of Bellerive.

Today...

Faced with the challenge of Vatican II, Religious Orders undertook a period of adaptation and renewal which was to make them more responsive to the 'signs of the times', whilst at the same time rooting them ever more deeply in the founding experiences of their origins.

Like any other corporate body, after its first fifty years or so, the Society of Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus, had settled into a period of consolidation—and large scale buildings in France, Belgium, England, Ireland and Scotland bear witness to this. The 1880s were a time of expansion outside Europe with some going to Canada in response to a cry from Bishop Grandin, OMI to Mother Josephine Petit, Second Superior General, and to Australia in response to an invitation from the Jesuits in Melbourne. In time huge buildings went up in those countries too and maintenance, very subtly but unmistakably, became the order of the day.

The return to the founding experiences initiated by Mother Raphael Conran (Superior General 1966-1975) and developed by Mother Breda O'Farrell (Superior General 1975-1993) led to the Society of Sisters FCJ re-discovering its nature and purpose. Since 1978 Sisters have gone to Sierra Leone, Argentina, Bolivia, Philippines, Indonesia and Romania—each time in response to the cry 'I thirst'. Many of these Sisters are teaching basic health care, nurturing human dignity, teaching people starved of Christianity just as Mother Xavier and Mother Julia did a hundred and fifty years ago... trying to live out their call to companionship.

New undertakings always make demands of existing works. When sisters went to Australia in 1882, and Mother Mary John Daly went with them, when sisters went to Canada in 1883 and Mother Julia Stack followed shortly afterwards, there were gaps left behind in Liverpool. Then there were people to fill them; nowadays falling numbers and new undertakings

together put a strain on old foundations but ‘mission not maintenance’ is one of the guiding principles. It falls to the lot of present FCJs, led by **Sister Paula Terroni**, elected Superior General in 1993 but formerly Head of Modern Languages at Bellerive, to discern where lies the greater need and how best to serve with available resources.

In retaining the trusteeship of St Mary’s High School on the Bellerive Site after amalgamation, the Sisters are cherishing the heritage that is theirs. Trusteeship is more than legalities: it is more than providing the statutory 15% for all capital projects. It involves the responsibility of helping not only to further the FCJ tradition of education but also to safeguard the ethos of the school.

In no small measure Governors share this responsibility. **Sisters Josephine Clayton** and **Mary Campion McCarren** serve as Governors of St Mary’s but other foundation governors, appointed by the trustees work with them, just as lay colleagues work with the Head.

In the fairly recent past **Sisters Mary Condron, Frances Leahy, Sarah McCullough, Paula Norcross, Paula Terroni, Teresa White** and **Mary Agnes Wilson** have been on the staff and **Sister Maura Foley** was involved in a supervisory capacity with kitchen and ancillary services.

Sister Brigid Halligan is the first FCJ to serve alone. When she was appointed Head of St Mary’s High School in 1993 it was an act of commitment by the Society to on-going involvement in Catholic education for girls in South Liverpool. Marie Madeleine accepted the call to Liverpool to help the women and girls of St Patrick’s predominantly immigrant population. Writing in 1990, Peter Stanford of ‘The Catholic Herald’ was aware of the problems confronting St Mary’s High School in an inner city area where the

confident optimism of the Victorian merchants is contrasted with the aftermath of the Toxteth riots. Of the social mix, he said that ‘the pupils are ethnically diverse—but Sister Mary Gabriel Barron had compiled statistics, ‘to reduce such an integral feature of the life of the school to columns of figures would go against the whole ethos of St Mary’s. As it was for Marie Madeleine, the mission is still to persons. So too the community links nurtured by the staff of St Mary’s reflect the old awareness of the importance of the school within the local community as a force to set against hopelessness and despair in an area of high unemployment and attendant problems. So too, the stress laid on maintaining and developing the Catholic ethos of the school reflects the concern for the preservation and handing on of the faith which Father Parker had in mind when he invited Madame d’Houët to Liverpool.

Society links with St Patrick’s are maintained by **Sister Theresa Green** who serves on the Governing Body of St Patrick’s School. Elsewhere, **Sister Veronica Hayes** serves in St Charles’ Parish, **Sisters Teresa Campbell** and **Patricia McKeown** in St Bernard’s and **Sister Dorothea Walker** in St Ambrose. **Sister Carole Moran** teaches in St Matthew’s.

In every case, the hope is that these Sisters are messengers of hope, bringing companionship and encouragement to people, for as the General Chapter of 1993 put it, our aim is

to announce by our lives the freeing redemption of Jesus...
no programme or particular work can capture our mission
our corporate mission is inherent in the very persons we are,
as Faithful Companions of Jesus

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