

# St Mary's Church

## Hampstead



### 1816-2016

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE,  
WESTMINSTER, LONDON, SW1P 1QJ



When the Abbe Jean Jacques Morel arrived in Hampstead in 1796 as a religious refugee from France, the world must have seemed both turbulent and unstable. Forced to leave his own country because of violence and upheaval, the leafy lanes of Hampstead would have appeared a haven of peace and tranquillity. In the following years he became the pastor for all in the local Catholic community and later agreed to be the first parish priest of the new chapel which was completed in August 1816. Significantly, in spite of its modest size and design it was the first permanent place of worship for Catholics in Hampstead since the Reformation 300 years earlier.

In his long life the Abbe Morel was also to witness the Catholic Emancipation Act passed by Parliament in 1829 that allowed Catholics once again to play a proper part in the life of this country. Two years before he died in 1852 he also witnessed the Restoration of the Hierarchy and the establishment of the Diocese of Westminster. Since that time countless numbers of parishioners and visitors have worshipped at St Mary's with the support of the many devoted priests who were the successors to the saintly Abbe Morel, each contributing their own special zeal, faith, kindness and dedication.

Reflecting on this rich spiritual heritage, I send my best wishes to the present Parish of St Mary's on the occasion of their Bicentenary celebrations and offer my heartfelt prayers for the continued growth of this community.

Yours devotedly

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Vincent Nichols".

Cardinal Vincent Nichols  
Archbishop of Westminster

When Abbé Morel arrived in Hampstead in 1796 as a political migrant, he could never have imagined that the beautiful Chapel he built in 1816, would be in 2016 a glorious Parish Church with a thriving community in the Diocese of Westminster. It was his foresight and generosity of spirit that led to the building of the Chapel and, of course, the generosity of many donors. As we prepare for the bicentenary of our Church, we thank God for the many good Parish Priests and generous people who have sustained St. Mary's for these 200 years. We face the future with the same resolve to ensure that future generations will love the Church of St. Mary's as well.

Monsignor Phelim Rowland

Rector

St. Mary's Hampstead

June 2015

## Introduction

The threshold of a new century is as good a time as any to go back to our foundations and to set out afresh the story of our church and parish. It is always good to look back as we prepare for a new future. The people who make up the flesh and bones of our parish are as varied as they were in the time of the Abbé Morel. Hampstead remains a transient place but everyone, whether they are newcomers, temporary settlers or visitors, - all fall in love with our beautiful and historic church.

I hope that this history, with its guide to this church dedicated to Mary, the Mother of Jesus and Saviour of the World, will both inform and inspire, as we give thanks for all those who have gone before us in faith. In thanking Dr Diana Dick for this labour of love, I pray that this little work may help all who read it to draw closer to Him who has first loved us.

Canon Michael Brockie  
St. Mary's, Hampstead  
December 2000

## **The History of St. Mary's**

On Saturday, 17th August 1816, the Vicar Apostolic of the London Area, the Right Reverence Dr William Poynter, came to Hampstead to bless and open the newly completed chapel of St. Mary in Holly Walk. We are told that the following day he preached a most eloquent sermon at the High Mass following which the collection realised over £85 - a significant sum towards the total building costs of £1,145. Less than a year earlier work had begun at the chosen site and by the following summer, the small box-shaped chapel together with a presbytery had been completed.<sup>1</sup> The relatively modest design and cost of the original building did not detract from its significance. It was the first permanent chapel to be built by Catholics in Hampstead since the Reformation three centuries earlier.

For a number of years previously the congregation had been accommodated at Oriel House in Little Church Row which had been rented for the purpose. By 1814 these premises were no longer adequate for the growing numbers and we are told that it had long been “the anxious wish of the Abbé Morel and of a few Catholic gentlemen residing in Hampstead to raise a proper and convenient place of worship for the accommodation of all”. Having found a favourable spot they set about converting this dream into reality.

The Abbé Jean-Jacques Morel was one of over 5.000 clergy from northern France who had sought refuge in England following the revolution in 1789.<sup>2</sup> The son of a Flax merchant, he was born in Verneuil in Normandy on January 10th 1766 and ordained in Evreux in 1790. Two years later, challenged to take the constitutional oath he refused and was later sent into exile by the revolutionary regime. Arriving at the English coast he spent the first four years of his exile in Sussex but we are told that he was then advised to move to Hampstead for the sake of his health. It would seem that Hampstead air agreed with him for he remained in the village for the rest of his life, dying in 1852 at the advanced age of 86 years.

Quite apart from consideration of health he was also needed in Hampstead in 1796 to minister to the large group of fellow French refugees, upwards of 200 persons it would appear, who were living in the village at the time.<sup>3</sup> By 1800, he also seems to have undertaken the care of other Catholics in the area and the earliest surviving registers in the archives date from this year. It is interesting that even at this early stage he referred to the rented premises in Oriol House as the Chapel of St. Mary no doubt in anticipation of the permanent building that was to come. Its dedication to the Mother of God reflected not just his own devotion to Our Lady but emphasised its continuity with the earliest known chapel in Hampstead that had been dedicated to the Blessed Virgin by the Benedictine monks of Westminster Abbey before the end of the first Millennium.<sup>4</sup>

By 1814, with the defeat of Napoleon, the majority of the refugees had returned to France but the Abbé chose to remain with his adopted congregation. Following his decision and with a suitable site available, seven Catholic gentlemen undertook to finance the building of a permanent chapel in Hampstead. The seven, **Messrs. Lescher, Power, Coppinger, Raphael, Kelly, Lund and Armstrong**, formed themselves into a committee under the guidance of the Abbé to oversee the enterprise. The congregation at this time numbered about a hundred although these numbers increased in the summer months with the arrival of itinerant haymakers from Ireland who worked in the fields about the village.<sup>5</sup> The Committee had put up the funds for the building of the chapel and the original plan envisaged that they would be repaid as the finances of the parish permitted. After the chapel had been open for a few years it became clear that the congregation was too poor to make repayment feasible and these gentlemen agreed that the remaining debt should be cancelled. In return, Masses would be said in perpetuity for them and their families. These Founders' masses are still celebrated each year.

Education was also a priority for the Abbé Morel and he undertook the religious education of both boys and young women at the several private Catholic schools in Hampstead at that time while on Sunday afternoons there was a regular catechism class in the chapel in Oriel House. Sometime after the building of the chapel in Holly Place, two schools -

one for boys and the other for girls, were set up next to the presbytery and supported by subscription from wealthier parishioners. By 1839 the Abbé was forced to widen his appeal for funds to the *Catholic Directory*, explaining that many of the original supporters had either died or moved away. He would seem to have been successful and in the 1860's the premises also included a small orphanage.

The Abbé's gentle influence seems to have been felt beyond his own congregation. Mary Hill tells us in *Hampstead in Light and Shade* that the Abbé was beloved by all whether of the Roman Catholic faith or not. Mr. Ainger, the Vicar of St. John's Parish Church in Church Row and Mr. Castleden from the Baptist Church were amongst his greatest friends, a relationship between Christian ministers in Hampstead that predated modern ecumenism by more than a hundred years. On one occasion he prayed with a Baptist elder when his son was gravely ill, an incident that the child's father would warmly recall in later years.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps because he was one of the few remaining French clergy in London after 1814, it was not surprising that the **Duchesse of Angoulême**, the only surviving child of Louis XVI and his wife, Marie Antoinette, should also have sought his help when she found herself once more in exile in England.<sup>7</sup> Even in the 1840's when he had retired from much of the active work of the parish, young children from the village were still brought to him on occasion for a blessing.<sup>8</sup>



In the two years before his death, the Abbé witnessed the Restoration of the Hierarchy to England and Wales. In the small print of the legislation that accompanied these changes was permission for bells to be rung from Catholic churches for the first time since the Reformation. Accordingly, the façade of the church was altered to include a bell tower and belfry while below, in a niche above the main door, was placed a painted statue of the Virgin and Child in Caen stone. These changes transformed the outside of the original chapel to that which we see today. The timing was opportune as it had been found that this west wall was unstable and it was essential to buttress it before it fell down. It was the inspiration of the architect, **William Wardell**, to incorporate these vital supports together with the other changes into the overall italianate design of the present exterior. It has been suggested that the design was modelled on the Abbé's original church in France. His death came peacefully on 1st May 1852 and as he had wished he was buried by the west door of the chapel that he had founded, clothed in vestments that he had made himself and always wore on special feastdays.<sup>9</sup>

The **Reverend Thomas Parkinson** who had helped the Abbé in his final years took over the running of the parish after his death until the Reverend John Walsh was appointed to the post in 1853. Sadly, within six years he had died and the **Very Reverend Monsignor Eyre** replaced him as rector.

Around this time the well known artist & Royal Academician, **Thomas Clarkson Stanfield**, who was a parishioner, presented his portrait of the Abbé Morel to St. Mary's where it can still be seen.

On the death of Mgr. Vincent Eyre in 1871, **Canon Arthur Dillon Purcell** took over the running of the parish. Perhaps because of the frequent changes of rector following the death of the Abbé, he found it in considerable financial difficulty and lacking a proper school. An energetic fund raiser he had soon set about putting this to rights. A new school was built at the rear of the church and a few years later, in 1878, the interior of the church was refurbished. Two new side altars of stone with carved wooden frontals and arched altarpieces designed by the firm of **Messrs. Gilbert Scott, GF Bodley and TF Garner** were added and it is likely that the earliest photograph of the inside of St. Mary's dates from this time.<sup>10</sup>

Soon after his arrival in the parish, the Canon had also invited the Franciscan Tertiary Sisters from St. Joseph's College in Mill Hill to undertake the running of the already established charity school and orphanage in Holly Place and they made their convent next door at Number 1. The convent and orphanage seems to have expanded with time to include all the buildings in the terrace south of the church including the present presbytery while Canon Dillon re-established his residence at Number 5 on the other side of the church. St. Vincent's, as this establishment was called, was largely self supporting and was

to be a feature of parish life for the next thirty years.<sup>11</sup> Canon Dillon's presence was very much missed when he died in 1900, the more so because his successor, **Fr Michael Fitzgerald**, was in poor health when he was appointed and having struggled with the demands of the Hampstead mission for six years was finally obliged to resign when his health deteriorated still further.

As a consequence when **Fr Thomas Walsh** was appointed to St Mary's in 1907 not only was the fabric of the church buildings in a poor way but the continuation of the mission in Hampstead was in considerable doubt. St. Mary's which had been the first Catholic chapel in the area was now surrounded by "daughter" churches so that the original parish was diminished in both size and numbers. However, Fr. Walsh seems to have had the energy and vision not only to repair the church but to embark on an ambitious plan to extend the original building. The school already condemned by the Board of Education was demolished and the land behind the chapel used to build the present sanctuary and side chapels. It is to Fr Walsh that we owe decoration of the sanctuary with its elaborate mosaics and in this plan the painting of the Assumption was destined for the rectangle between the angels.

The convent and orphanage were likewise in a precarious state of repair and more importantly their finances were also giving cause for anxiety. Under the circumstances Cardinal Bourne

decided to close the orphanage and to amalgamate the convent with the Sisters of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Canning Town. Meanwhile, Fr Walsh undertook to repair the vacated properties taking the opportunity to move the presbytery back to Number 4 as it had been in the Abbé Morel's lifetime. The remaining five properties in Holly Place were then let to produce an income which helped to repay the considerable debt involved in these changes. Much of this work was complete by the time that the parish celebrated the Centenary of the chapel in 1916 in the middle of the First World War. After the war, Fr Walsh went on to build a flourishing parish much helped in later years by **Fr John Philip Valentine**.

In 1930, **Fr Francis Brown** was appointed to St. Mary's. An older priest, he served the parish for the next eleven years. Margaret Powell, a member of the Gilbert Scott family who were living in the parish at the time, recalls childhood memories of "dear Father Brown so akin to G.K. Chesterton's, who was going deaf, so was inclined to raise his voice in the confessional so we waiting outside could hear 'Oh oh dear dear, you can't have done anything like that!' We waited to see who came out." In 1935 the Baldachino designed by her father, **Adrian Gilbert Scott**, was placed over the altar and the painting of the Assumption was once more moved, this time from its lofty position between the angels to its present situation.

When **Fr Joseph Geraerts** became parish priest in 1941 on the retirement of Fr Brown, England was again at war and London was in the middle of the “Blitz”. Although the church escaped major bomb damage, the fabric of the building was in a poor state. Fr Geraerts not only organised and paid for the necessary repairs but also built up a contingency fund to help with future restorations.

During this period one of the more notable parishioners was **General Charles de Gaulle** who lived for about a year at 99 Frognaal, now St. Dorothy’s Convent. We are told that his tall and impressive figure was always to be seen in the front bench at the 11 o’clock Mass whenever he was home. In 1950 Fr Geraerts was made a Canon of the Metropolitan Chapter of Westminster. According to Gino Masero’s memoirs, the Canon was a powerful sort of character - full of drive and goodness and under his influence the parish was to thrive in this post war period when the Masero family were parishioners.<sup>12</sup> It was the Canon’s suggestion that **Gino Masero**, a woodcarver by trade, should carve the present Stations of the Cross. He had not attempted anything on this scale before and the experience was to prove a sharp learning curve. So much so, that when they were finally completed in 1954, the sculptor toyed with the idea of recarving the first two which he felt were stilted and weak by comparison with the later Stations. But the wise Canon would not agree saying “let everyone for once see an artist in the making.”

As a result of the growing congregation, in the 1960's plans were drawn up which involved demolishing the interior of the original church, leaving only the historic façade and putting in its place a circular building with a car park underneath. Fortunately, these plans never got off the ground and St. Mary's was left in its original state. In 1970 Canon Geraerts retired after twenty-nine years as pastor to the parish and **Fr Francis Morrall** took over as parish priest.

During the following two years there were considerable repairs to the presbytery and at this stage Fr Morrall decided that there was sufficient living space on the upper floors of the building to allow the ground floor to be converted to a much needed parish centre. The first General Parish Meeting was called and later a Parish Council was elected. In 1976, following the Second Vatican Council, the Sanctuary was reordered. The original stone altar was redesigned and changed to face the congregation and a new baptismal font was placed nearby while the original baptistery was incorporated into the parish rooms.

Fr Morrall retired in 1987 and Fr, now **Canon, Michael Brockie** was appointed in his place. In spite of considerable repairs to the church in the 1970's further problems with dry rot were discovered and it became clear that major building works were needed that involved the closing of the church for a period of twelve months in 1990-1. During this time St. John's Parish

Church in Church Row very generously made the Moreland Parish Hall available for worship and Sunday Masses were celebrated there. When the church was reopened in all its glory it revealed for the first time the design of the roof timbers of the original chapel which had previously been concealed by the flat ceiling of the nave.

In spite of the contingency fund, the repairs and restoration left the parish with an enormous debt as the total cost was in the region of £750,000. At the time it seemed inevitable that this debt would be around for generations to come.

Surprisingly, within the next five years with the help of fund raising, grants and individual donations, in particular from the family of the late Elizabeth Stanley, the original sum was reduced at a brisk pace. In early 1996, Fr Morrall died leaving a generous final gift to the church that he had served to faithfully for seventeen years. This sum combined with funds raised by a Gala evening performed by **Dame Judi Dench** and **Michael Williams**, her husband and also a parishioner, and **John Moffatt** enabled the final repayment to be made in May of that year which also celebrated the Bicentenary of the Abbé Morel's arrival in Hampstead in 1796.

In the summer of 2001 Canon Brockie was moved to the parish of the Holy Redeemer and St. Thomas More in Chelsea. **Canon Daniel Cronin**, who had spent most of his pastoral life at Westminster Cathedral, came to be parish priest in his place

celebrating in the following year the 25th anniversary of his priesthood. In September 2006 he moved to the church of St. Thomas More in Knebworth and **Monsignor Phelim Rowland** was appointed parish priest of St. Mary's in his place. Monsignor Rowland had been a military chaplain for 27 years and was latterly Principal Roman Catholic chaplain and Vicar General to the army. By coincidence, he was also born in Hampstead.

In 2014, in keeping with the liturgical norms that the Reserved Sacrament should be visible to the faithful, a new tabernacle was installed in the sanctuary behind the main altar. Made in Spain its design is based on medieval reliquary. The central panel shows Christ in Majesty surrounded by the symbols of the four evangelists. On either side four smaller enamelled panels illustrate events in the life of the Virgin Mary: The Annunciation, Nativity, Epiphany and the Flight into Egypt. Meanwhile the Blessed Sacrament chapel to the right of the main altar has been returned to its original dedication to Saint Joseph.

September 2015 will see the start of a year-long celebration to mark St. Mary's bicentennial anniversary. Looking back on the past 200 years of the history of St. Mary's, it seems surprising that the little chapel that was built in 1816 should have survived all these vicissitudes in its history but it would have come as no surprise to its founder.



The Abbé Morel wrote of St. Mary's in 1841:

*"After God, we owe everything we do enjoy to this our most Holy Patroness, who has been ever since the building of the Chapel, its chief support and by whose protection alone I am confident it hath stood hitherto and will I hope and trust under her powerful patronage stand forever."*

Le Samedi onzieme jour de Janvier de l'année mil sept cent  
 Soixante et six par Moi Pierre Cusi Bourgeois & Notaire  
 Jean Jacques Morel fils né d'Henri du et en l'eglise de Saint  
 Qu' Jean Baptiste Morel marchand & de Anne Marguerite  
 Guincestre sa femme. L'union de ce mariage de cette  
 Paroisse de Paris. Le dit Cusi Bourgeois & Notaire de cette  
 Paroisse de Paris. La mariée Anne Guincestre  
 Bolane femme d'Amable de cette Paroisse qui ont signé  
 avec nous Le Prieur abbaté.  
 Guincestre & Cusi Bourgeois. Le blanc femme d'Amable  
 Le Samedi onzieme jour du mois de Janvier de l'année  
 mil sept cent Soixante et six.

An extract from the Baptismal register of the Parish Church of Saint  
 Madeleine in Verneuil where the future Abbé Jean Jacques MOREL  
 was baptised on January 11th 1766 the day after he was born, the  
 eldest in the family, to Jean Baptiste Morel and his second wife,  
 Anne Marguerite Guincestre.

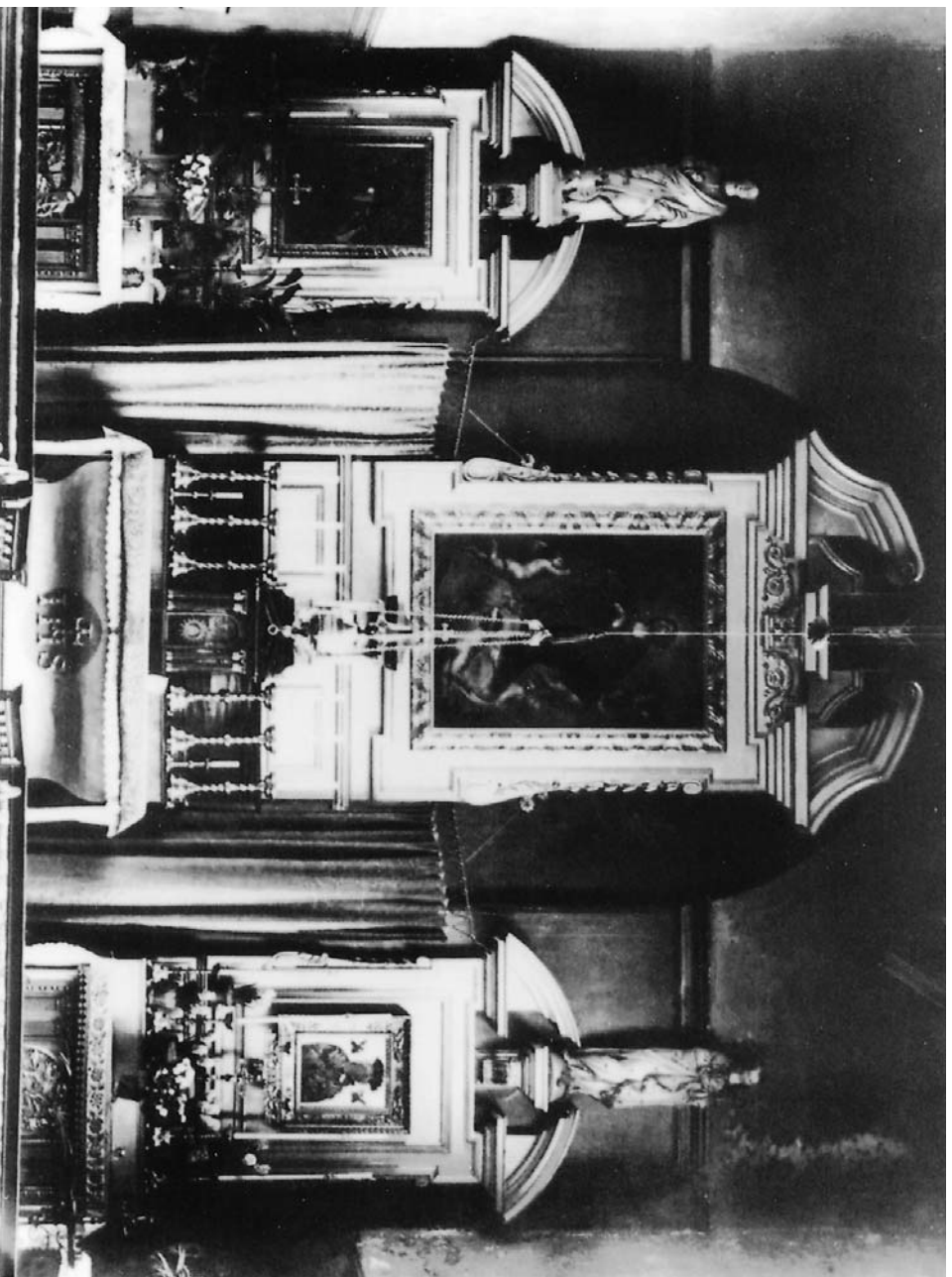
Rapport des Eclésiastiques  
 Pour l'Angleterre  
 Verneuil  
 Registre ouvert au District  
 Du District de Verneuil pour l'exécution  
 de la loi Du 26. août 1792. Portant sur  
 les Eclésiastiques qui sont par jure hurs de France  
 ou qui, après l'avoir prêté, l'ont retracté  
 et ont persisté dans leur retractation.  
 Du mardi 11. 7<sup>bre</sup> 1792. l'an 4<sup>e</sup> de  
 La Liberté.  
 En la Salle ordinaire des Séances  
 Du District Du District de Verneuil  
 Par le Procureur de la M<sup>te</sup> Louis Crozier

Following the Abbé Morel's expulsion by the French State for refusing  
 to take the Constitutional Oath, a passport was issued on 5th September  
 1792 commanding him to leave the country by the nearest frontier. He  
 sailed to England from Dieppe . He is described as having blue eyes and  
 fair hair and was estimated to be a little over five feet in height.  
 Ref. AD Evreux 57L15

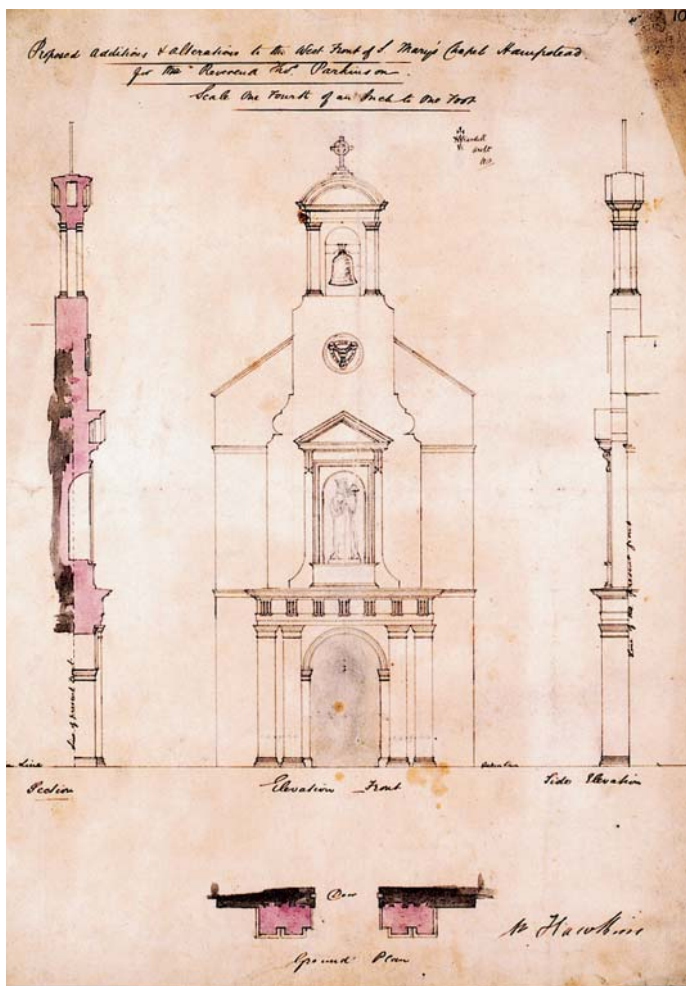


Oriel House seen from Church Row. Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre.





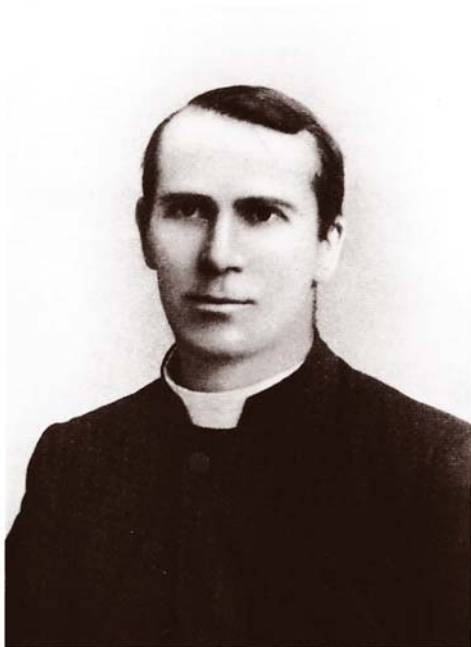
**The earliest picture of the interior of St Mary's circa 1878.**



**William Wardell's plans for the West front of St Mary's in 1850**  
Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.



1



2



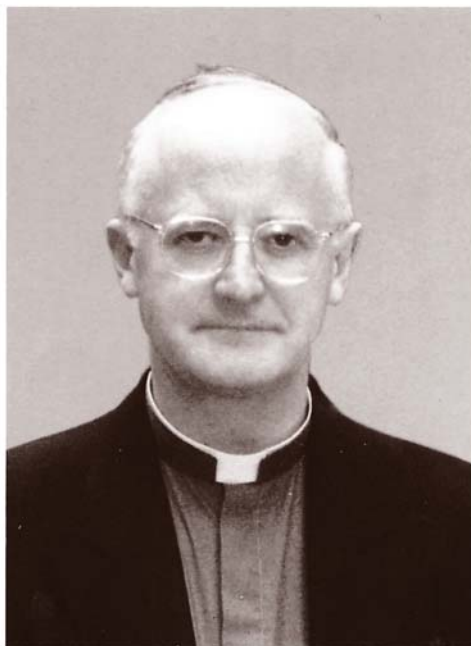
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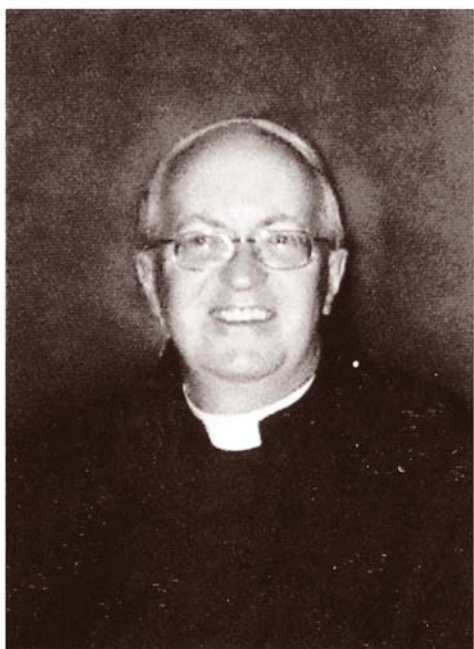
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- 1 Canon Arthur Dillon Purcell
- 2 Fr Thomas Walsh
- 3 Fr Francis Brown by W. Lee- Hankey  
Photo A.C. Cooper (Neg & Print Ltd).
- 4 Canon Joseph Geraerts
- 5 Fr Francis Morrall
- 6 Canon Michael Brockie
- 7 Canon Daniel Cronin
- 8 Gino Masero. Photo Chris Pye



8





**Marie Antoinette with her children by Madame Vigée-Le Brun.**

In 1787 the year in which this portrait was painted, the Princess Sophie Beatrix died aged eleven months and the six year old Dauphin points to her empty cradle. Within eight years everyone in this picture would be dead with the exception of the eldest child, the Princess Marie Thérèse Charlotte - later known as the Duchesse d'Angoulême.

Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon. ©Photo R.M.N. - Arnaudet; J. Schormans.





Interior of St. Mary's in 1907 showing the new Sanctuary



**Interior of St. Mary's in 2014 showing the newly installed Tabernacle.** Photographer Stephanie M. Kalber



**Monsignor Phelim Rowland**

## The Buildings

Holly Place lies towards the top end of Holly Walk on the right hand side. The church is in the centre of a small terrace of Georgian houses. Numbers 1 and 2 Holly Place were part of St. Vincent's Convent and Orphanage in the nineteenth century and although these are now private houses the small grill on the door of Number 2 recalls its earlier occupation. The original presbytery was sited, as now, at Number 4, but during the later decades of the nineteenth century Canon Dillon Purcell lived at Number 5 while Number 4 was incorporated into the expanding premises of the orphanage. The distinctive exterior of the present church with its bell tower and statue of the Virgin and Child was added in the early 1850's following the design of the architect and parishioner, William Wardell, to mark the restoration of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy.

On entering the church the black marble slab with brass lettering which covers the grave of the Abbé Morel can be seen set into the floor in front of the main door where his successor and two other priests are also buried. On the left hand wall are several memorials to the founders of the chapel and a more recent memorial to Elizabeth Stanley, a former parishioner and benefactor. Above the door on the right hand is the list of Rectors from the Abbé Morel until the present day. Stairs lead to the choir loft and organ.



The organ at St. Mary's was rebuilt by Bishop & Son in 1991 as a two manual extension instrument. Three of its four ranks are enclosed and the remaining diapason stop is incorporated in the casework. Its clear bright tone is especially suited for early music and for supporting congregational singing within the liturgy. The cost was met by the Right Reverend Monsignor Edward G. Dunderdale, Protonotary Apostolic, in memory of his late sister, Winifred Jacques.

From the lobby the main body of the church with its elaborate decorations can be seen. The original chapel was considerably smaller than today's building extending only to the end of the present nave. The sanctuary and side chapels were added after 1907 when the interior essentially assumed the structure that we see today. This change from old to new can best be appreciated by looking at the ceiling where the roof timbers of the original chapel meet the barrel vault of the 1907 additions.

Below the arched windows of the nave are the carved wooden Stations of the Cross in bas-relief by Gino Masero which were commissioned in the early 1950's and completed in 1954. They are made of French lime, a wood that was much favoured by sixteenth century German wood carvers. At the same time more seating was added and two of these new style benches have a small mouse carved on their backrest. These "mice" were the trademark of Robert Hughes "the mouseman" of Kilburn, North Yorkshire.

Influenced to some extent by the ethos of the Arts and Crafts movement of the earlier part of the twentieth century, the firm he founded is still flourishing today and still marking its products with the traditional Mouse signature.

The sanctuary is dominated by the Baldachino which was designed by Adrian Gilbert Scott in the 1930's. The Gilbert Scott family were parishioners of St. Mary's at that time. The painting of the Assumption of the Virgin behind the main altar was bought on the Continent in anticipation of the new chapel by one of the original founders, Mr George Armstrong. He presented it to St. Mary's on behalf of his only daughter, Frances Hall. After the new sanctuary and side altars were added in 1907, Fr Walsh planned that this picture which he said was by one of Murillo's best pupils, should be placed on the east wall between the angels and with a crown above it to represent the Assumption and Coronation of Our Lady. The rectangle where the picture hung can still be made out on the wall between the two sets of angels.

When the Baldachino was placed in the sanctuary in 1935 the painting was moved down to its present position behind the altar. The decoration of the sanctuary with its elaborate mosaics was carried out by the firm of G.L. Simpson & Son of St. Martin's Lane in London.

On the right hand side of the main altar is St. Joseph's chapel. The mosaic decoration reflects the saint, incorporating his

attribute, the Lily and Star of David. Above the altar a carved relief shows the saint wearing his carpenter's apron and holding the child Jesus in his arms. The baptismal font was moved here from the sanctuary in April 2015.

On the left hand side of the nave is the Lady Chapel. The mosaic of the Nativity above the altar is a memorial to Fr. Thomas Walsh who played such a large part in the extension and decoration of the church. The two prie-dieux are dedicated to the memory of three officers who lost their lives in the Second World War. Sub Lt. Cyril Lanham Oaker RNVR was killed in Arramances on 7th June 1944 aged 43 years. The second inscription is to two brothers, F/O John Edmund Seaton Macalister who died on 13th June 1940 aged 27 years and his younger brother P/O Peter Donald Macalister who died on 2nd June 1941 aged 24 years.

At his own request the Abbé was buried under a simple marble slab in the porch however, a tomb monument was commissioned by the parish from the architect, William Wardell in 1857. This stone monument bears the Abbé's effigy while the heraldic lion at his feet indicates that he died outside his native country. The side panel is decorated by three quatrefoils containing images of Our Lady with St. James and St John on either side. St. James is denoted by his staff while St. John is recognised by the chalice which he holds in his hands. These saints with their attributes allude to the Abbé's own Christian name of Jean Jacques.

## **Notable Parishioners and Connections with St. Mary's**

### **The Webb Family**

The temporary chapel in Oriel House was rented from Mr. Joseph Webb from 1796 until 1816 according to Mr C E Mauriceau in *"The Transactions of the Hampstead Antiquarian and History Society for the year 1900"*. A Memorandum in St Mary's archives records an earlier connection with the Webb family. According to Charles Clarke FSA there was a chapel in the house of Joseph Webb near the Square from 1766 until 1777. This may have been the property shown on the 1762 map of Hampstead belonging to his father, Sir Thomas Webb Bart.

### **The Duchesse d'Angoulême**

According to a letter in the parish archives and Mary Hill in *"Hampstead in Light and Shade"* on one occasion the daughter of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, the Duchesse d'Angoulême, came to visit the Abbé Morel in Hampstead. This Princess was the only member of the Royal family imprisoned in the Tuilleries to escape death in the Revolution. We are told that two handsomely dressed ladies drove in a carriage to the foot of Holly Hill where they got out and walked to the top. Sometime later the Abbé himself, bareheaded, escorted them to their carriage. As they stepped into the vehicle the elder lady kissed the Abbé's hand



repeatedly weeping bitterly all the time. The Duchesse d'Angoulême was to witness two further revolutions in France and twice more was sent into exile. She died in 1851, 58 years after the execution of her parents.

### **Mrs Anne Roberts**

Housekeeper to the Abbé Morel, as a sixteen year old servant girl she had rescued the sacred vessels from the Sardinian Chapel in Lincoln's Inn Fields at the time of the Gordon Riots in 1780. She took them to the Ship Tavern for safety and when the mob had moved on the priest said a Mass of Thanksgiving in an upper room of the inn to which she made the responses. This account was given in "*The Lamp*" when she died in 1857 at the age of ninety-three years. The Ship Tavern, which has a plaque on its outside wall recalling this episode, can be found behind the church of St. Anselm and St. Cecilia in Kingsway.

### **William Wardell 1823-1899**

This architect worked in London in the 1840's and after converting to Catholicism became a parishioner of St. Mary's. He designed the present exterior of the chapel with its belfry and statue of the Virgin and Child in 1850. No image survives of the exterior of the 1816 chapel but the photograph below shows part of the original window in the West wall which was revealed by the major building works in 1990-1. Following the death of the Abbé Morel in 1852 he was also responsible for the Tomb Monument which is now in the Lady Chapel. He emigrated to Melbourne in Australia in 1858. He later became

Inspector General of Public Buildings in the State of Victoria and was responsible for the design of both St. Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne and St. Mary's Cathedral in Sydney.



### **The Gilbert Scott Family**

They had close connections with St. Mary's both as parishioners and in the interior design of the chapel over the generations. In 1878 two new side altars in stone with carved wood portals and arched altar pieces were installed under the direction of Messrs Gilbert Scott, GF Bodley, and TF Garner. These side altars, now gone, are likely to be the subject of the earliest photograph of the interior dating from around this time. In 1935 Adrian Gilbert Scott was responsible for the design and installation of the Baldachino which was thought to have been inspired by that in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

### **Mr Thomas Clarkson Stanfield R.A.**

He was a convert to Catholicism having been received into the Church in the time of the Abbé Morel. A noted sea and landscape artist, his only portraits were of family and close friends and his portrait of the Abbé is the only known finished oil portrait by him. It has been described as a labour of piety and friendship. The artist presented it after the Abbé's death to the then Rector, Monsignor Eyre. This portrait, in its original frame is still held by St. Mary's. Clarkson Stanfield's funeral in the little church was attended by Baron Friedrich Von Hugel, Charles Dickens and Edwin Landseer. Clarkson Stanfield's son, Fr Francis Stanfield, wrote the hymns "Sweet Sacrament Diving" and "O Sacred Heart".

### **Baron Friedrich Von Hugel (1852-1925)**

The elder son of Carl Alexander Anselm, Baron Von Hugel and Elizabeth Farquharson, a Scottish Presbyterian lady who was a convert to the Catholic Church, he was a Catholic theologian, religious historian and philosopher who lived at 4 Holford Road, Hampstead between 1876-1903, now marked by a blue commemorative plaque. He came to exercise considerable religious influence in cultural circles in England both inside and outside the Catholic Church. A contemporary account recalls his walking up and down the Aisle of St. Mary's saying his rosary.

**Graham Greene**, the novelist, was married to Vivienne Dayrell-Browning at St. Mary's on 15th October 1927.

### **General Charles de Gaulle**

The wartime leader of the Free French and subsequently President of France, lived in Frognal House 99 Frognal (now St. Dorothy's Convent) during the war years 1940-2 and attended Mass at St. Mary's when he was in London.

### **Gino Masero**

He was born in Scarborough in 1915 and began his working life as a trainee chef at the Savoy Hotel where his father was head chef. His artistic talent was revealed when he was asked to carve a block of salt for a table decoration. He regarded the commission to carve the Stations of the Cross as a turning point in his career and went on to carve the statue of Christ the King which stands above the High Altar at St. Paul's Cathedral. The crib figures which are seen at St. Mary's during the Christmas season are also by the same artist. He died in 1996.

### **Diana Dick**

September 2015

## References:

1. Minute Book and other documents in St. Mary's archives. These papers are the basis of much of the two later histories of the church, Historical Sketch of St. Mary's Holly Place by D.J.C. in 1916 and A History of St. Mary's Hampstead 1816-1977 by Frank Morrall and Colin Davies. Ditching Press Sussex 1977.
2. The French Exiled Clergy by Dominic Aidan Bellenger Downside Abbey Bath 1986.
3. The Topography and Natural History of Hampstead by John James Park 1814.
4. John James Park acknowledged the help of the Abbé Morel for this information.
5. Canon Purcell in the minutes of the "*Hampstead Antiquarian and Historical Society for March 1900*".
6. "*Hampstead in Light and Shade*". Mary Hill. Baines & Scarsbrook Ltd 1945. "*Hampstead, Its Historic Houses, Its Literary and Artistic Association*" by Anna Maxwell 1897.
7. Letter in Archives testifying to memories of Mrs Simmonds, a Hampstead resident who witnessed the visit. Mrs. Simmonds was born in 1795 and died at the age of 101 years in 1896. See page 32.
8. Letters of William Henry Bliss 1835-1909.
9. "*The Tablet*". May 15 1852.
10. "*Hampstead Antiquarian and Historical Society*" March 1900.
11. "*Our FDM Story Begins*" Volume 1 parts 1 & 2 Sister Mary Corona. Ladywell Convent, GU7 1ST
12. Gino Masero unpublished memoirs and "*Elements of Woodcarving*". Chris Pye. Guild of Master Craftsmen Publications Ltd. 2000.

The following letter written by Miss Emily Field one of the founder members of the Hampstead Heath Protection Society in St. Mary's archives.

Squires Mount  
Hampstead NW

Dear Canon Purcell

*My sisters tell me that you would like to have the enclosed anecdote about the Abbé Morel written down correctly so I copied it from an old note book and walked down to Lismore Road where Mrs Simmonds' two surviving daughters live. They added the address.*

*Mrs Simmonds came to Hampstead on her marriage October 14th 1819. She lived in Holly Bush Hill next door to Potter's workshop.*

*The first Sunday after her arrival there, when she was walking with her husband they met such a stately looking foreigner that Mr Simmonds involuntarily touched his hat. The other took his quite off. It was the Abbé Morel.*

*After that he never passed Mrs Simmonds without speaking. One day she saw a foreign looking carriage standing at the bottom of Holly Bush Hill, and two ladies handsomely dressed but not like Englishwomen came down escorted by the Abbé bareheaded.*

*The elder lady when in the carriage took the Abbé's hand and kissed it repeatedly the tears were streaming down her face.*

*A gentleman who was standing by, said to Mrs Simmonds "Do you know who that lady is? She is the Duchesse d'Angoulême."*

*Mrs Simmonds who lived nearly all her life in Hampstead was born 12th September 1795. Died 18th February 1896. Her intellect was quite unimpaired to the end.*

*The above written down by me from Mrs Simmonds' telling in 1885, has been read today to her two daughters and they believe it correct. Emily Field March 1899.*

## **Pastors of St. Mary's Hampstead**

Canon Jean Jacques Morel	1796-1852
Fr. John Walsh	1853-1859
Monsignor Vincent Eyre	1859-1871
Canon Arthur Purcell	1871-1900
Fr. Michael Fitzgerald	1900-1907
Fr. Thomas Walsh	1907-1930
Fr. Francis Brown	1930-1941
Canon Joseph Geraerts	1941-1970
Fr. Francis Morall	1970-1987
Canon Michael Brockie	1987-2001
Canon Daniel Cronin	2001-2006
Monsignor Phelim Rowland	2006-



Back cover. Abbé Jean-Jacques Morel  
by Clarkson Stanfield R.A.  
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