

Introduction



The history of Catholic life in Hendon is, like the history of Catholic life in the rest of London and these islands, shrouded in a great deal of mystery. Before the advent of recorded history and with the coming of parishes themselves, there is little basic written evidence of the existence of the place known now as Hendon, much less of its Catholic life.

However, we may fruitfully speculate that the presence of the Faith in this part of the country was at least as strong as elsewhere. Hendon (the place name means "at the high down") lies near to the major thoroughfare linking London (Londinium) with St. Albans (Verulamium) and beyond. This was the famous Watling Street which ran from Dover to London and thence to Chester via St. Albans following the course of the present Edgware Road which again forms part of the western boundary of the present parish area.

There is some evidence of other Roman roads passing through the district - some Roman coins and artefacts have been unearthed. There is also a long-standing belief

that there was also a Roman Temple in Hendon probably on or near the site of the present Anglican church of St. Mary's. Indeed, this is given some credence by the names of the surrounding roads; Sunny Hill Park, Sunny Gardens Road, Sunningfields Road, all give testimony that there may well have been a Temple here dedicated to the Sun-god in Roman times.

This being so, and with the supporting pastoral injunction of Gregory the Great, (to take over and use the buildings and temples of the pagans as a means of establishing the community of the Church more quickly), it may not be idle speculation that the first Catholic presence in this part of the country could well have been centred around the place of "the high down upon which the temple to the sun-god had already been established".

Historically, Hendon has always been associated with the Abbey of Westminster. Before the present Abbey building was under way, there is an earlier deed record (circa 959A.D.) of the signing over of the Manor and Parish of Hendon to the Abbot and Community of Westminster. The Manor of Hendon became the home farm of the Abbey and produce was sent daily to Westminster from Hendon. Presumably therefore, when the great new Abbey was built and opened, to become the tomb of its builder and inspirer, Edward the Confessor, the Manor of Hendon was represented.

Incidentally, it is for this reason that the parish of Hendon is a vicarage and not a rectory, - the lesser part of the tithes would have been paid to the priest of the parish, presumably originally a monk, whilst the greater part of the tithes would have gone to the Abbey. With the demise of the Confessor and the coming of the Normans, a new chapter in history is begun and the mention of Hendon in the Domesday Book is sufficient to maintain a link in the chain of history.

During the Black Death in 1349 Hendon became a place of refuge. The Abbot and twenty-six of the monks escaped the monastery to take refuge in Hampstead but the plague travelled with them and they all died in May 1349. However, eight monks travelled to Hendon and survived the plague. During the summer of 1349, Hendon was a refugee centre for all the surviving abbey farms in Middlesex, Hertfordshire and Essex, whilst the plague raged in London and around. The farm rolls of Hendon record the arrival of vast numbers of cattle, sheep and horses in May; and the departure of the same in September together with calves, lambs and foals, which had been born in the refuge of Hendon during the summer of 1349.

THE MISSION IN HENDON.

Two hundred years pass and another King's great matter plagued the land, but with the passing of a further two hundred years the active persecution was lifting. With the respite of circumstance, a withdrawing of punitive measures and the lightening of the legal burdens, another community was prevailed upon to come to Hendon. At the request of Bishop Nicolas Wiseman, Coadjutor Vicar Apostolic of the London District in 1846, (later to become the First Archbishop of Westminster in the Restoration of the Hierarchy after the Catholic Emancipation Act) the Passionist Fathers opened a house briefly in Hampstead. Bishop Wiseman lived in Hendon at Ravensfield House (later a convent, later still Hendon bus garage, later yet Usher Hall, a hall of residence for Middlesex University). They purchased Woodfield House in Cool Oak Lane in the area called Hyde and opened St. Joseph's Retreat as a church, community house and school. They planned to develop Woodfield House but met with much local opposition and in 1858 moved to Highgate.

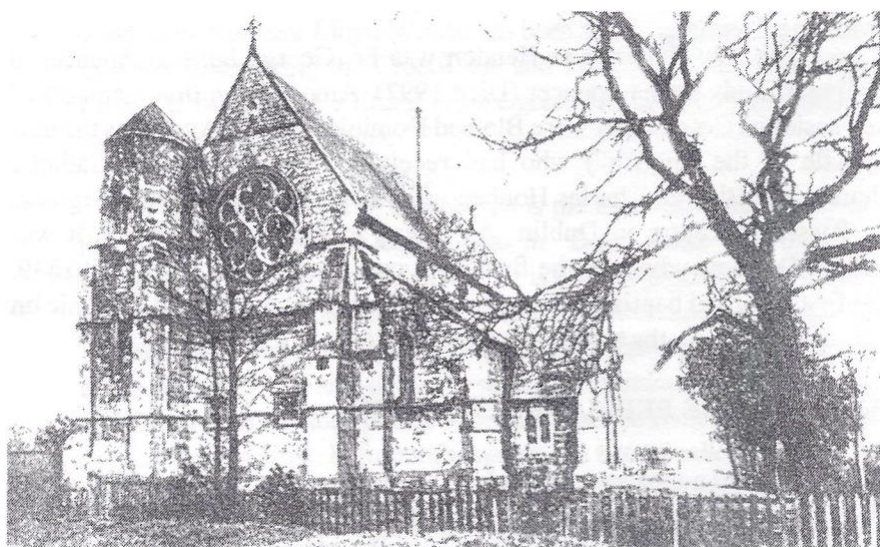
When the Passionists decided to move to Highgate, they had already established a Mass centre in the Burroughs near the site of the present church in Hendon; when they moved, the church furnishings, including the original bell and records were transferred to the Mass centre. This temporary chapel was briefly called St. Edward's (echoing an

older Westminster connection) but was later dedicated to the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In time it became known as Our Lady of Dolours.

The first Superior at Hendon was Fr. George Ignatius Spencer, a relative of Lady Diana Spencer (Died 1997). Amongst the first members of the Passionist Community were Blessed Dominic Barberi, (known as the new "apostle of the English") who had received Newman into the Catholic Church; and Blessed Charles Houben, who later established Mount Argus as the Passionist centre in Dublin. According to Passionist archives, it was Blessed Dominic who offered the first Mass on Low Sunday, 15th April 1849. The first recorded baptism at Hendon was celebrated by Blessed Dominic on 15th June, two months before his untimely death in Reading.

BUILDING THE PERMANENT CHURCH.

In 1850 a small wooden chapel had been built in the vicinity of the present church, and even though the Passionists moved in 1858, they continued to serve the Hendon Mission until 1861. Cardinal Wiseman then asked Monsignor Edward Clifford, (the church may have taken its name from a little conceit!) a secular priest from Leeds, to undertake the task of building a permanent church. There is some correspondence with Cardinal Wiseman stating his anxiety about the finances(!) and also some concern about the place that he has just left. Mgr. Clifford then set out on a fund-raising trip to Ireland which achieved the sum of £450; and with £2,000 donated by the Cardinal the building work began. There is some further delightful correspondence between the Monsignor and the architect, Gilbert Blount, mostly about delays and money! Transporting the stone was very difficult, especially as Egerton Gardens was not built until 1910 and access was solely from Chapel Walk. As soon as he had supervised the opening of the church in 1863, Mgr. Clifford went to France to become a Carthusian and died in La Grande Chartreuse. The original bill for the church was £2,206 and fifteen shillings! The architect's fee at 5% was £110 and six shillings! In the building of the new church considerable hardship and debt was incurred, and the resulting debts were not cleared without a great deal of heartache and difficulty. Indeed, the archives contain appeals to both Cardinals Wiseman and Manning in turn; and several bills, one to a local ".... builder and undertaker".



Our Lady of Dolours, Hendon
1863 to 1927

Mgr. Clifford and Canon O'Neil were eventually succeeded (after Frs. Ballard, Pare, Tunstall and Telford) by Fr. George Carter. Fr. George Ballard found the congregation too small to support a priest in residence and ran the mission from Kingsbury where he also ran an orphanage. He was succeeded briefly by Henry Pare and in turn by Edmund Tunstall. He it was who set about starting a school and he also intended to build a presbytery. He achieved the former, but not the latter.

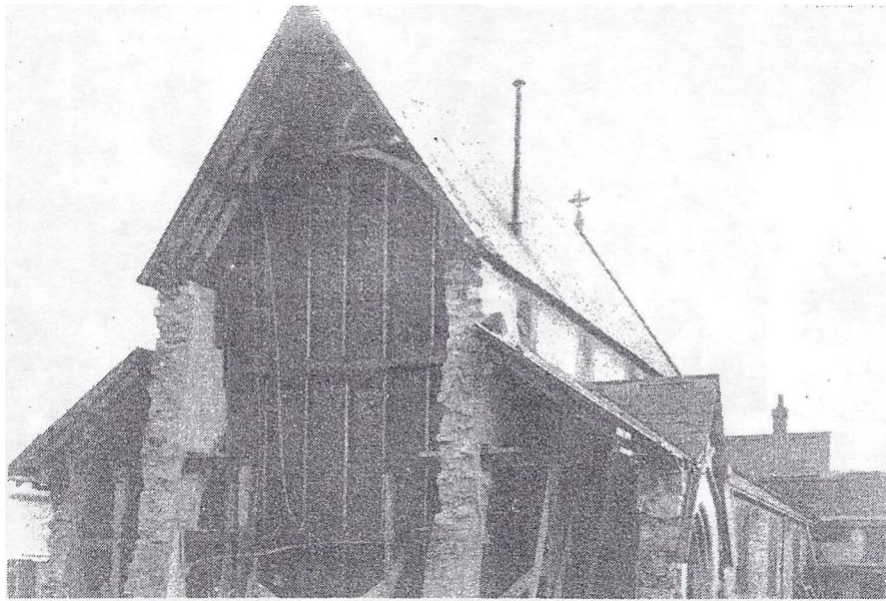
The school was begun by using two hired rooms in the Burroughs and consisted of 37 pupils aged between three and thirteen years. All paid a penny per week (hence the term "the Penny schools") and there was one teacher and possibly an assistant. It was not possible at that time to build a presbytery next to the church and so Fr. Carter opted to build a parish house from his own resources in Church Road. At first therefore he lived in lodgings at 4, Brent Villas. St. George's Lodge was to be the presbytery until 1926 when major alterations to the church were carried out. These alterations involved the complete reversing of the lie of the church (the altar was taken from the East end of the building to the West); and the building of a new sanctuary area at the west end entailed the knocking down of a bell-tower and rose window and the extending of two new transepts. Fr. Carter, in his turn, wrote to the Cardinal Manning, now resident in Westminster. Manning had ordained Fr. Carter on St. Patrick's Day 1866, and had originally persuaded Fr. Carter to take up the Mission; he therefore looked as favourably as possible upon Father's request. Fr. Carter regularly travelled to a house in Edgware to say Mass carrying a small stone altar and the vestments with him! Occasionally, it is recorded, he would get a lift from a pony and trap!

Surely it was this encouragement that enabled Fr. Carter to undertake his extensive work with the school-board and the wider community of Hendon by whom he was so esteemed. Aably assisted by Fr. John O'Dwyer, and subsequently by Fr. Thomas Leghorn for twenty and more years, Fr. Carter laboured from 1871 until his death on 18th February 1924. His mammoth period of parochial service had seen the growth of the parish from a mere 50 souls to well over 500. This growth in the parish mirrored the general growth in the district - the arrival of Midland's Railway in 1867/68 must surely have been a decisive factor in bringing fresh blood to the town. Again, this new social influx is reflected not only in church growth, but in the building of such a mundane thing as a new sewage works in Brent Cross in 1867!

No history of the church in Hendon at this time would be complete without mention of *The Poor Handmaids of Christ* (whose Foundress Mother Katherine Kasper was raised to the Altars by Pope Francis in October 2018). It was in 1882 that five sisters began their work in Hendon at Ravensfield House, formerly the residence of Cardinal Wiseman. It was here that they established schools, one a boarding school and the other an elementary school. Later the sisters moved to Norden Court, opening what is now St. Joseph's School. In 1894 the parish school moved to new premises adjacent to the church. This was called St. Mary's and continued until 1966 when the sisters gave up their school to the diocese and the parish school moved to this site, St. Joseph's; The former school building of St. Mary's becoming the parish social centre.

THE ENLARGING OF THE CHURCH.

With the passing of Fr. Carter a watershed had been crossed. Immediately Fr. Goggin was installed as parish priest and, with the congregation now standing at 1,000, in the August of 1924 a Restoration Fund was opened to begin the task of enlarging the church, now some 60 years old and showing signs of subsidence. Again the task was far from simply attained, but the church in it's present form and direction was solemnly opened on 23rd April, the feast of St. George (surely not a complete coincidental) by Cardinal Bourne.



About face for the Altar!

Reading through the parish archives there is the usual mixture of devotion and debt throughout the 20's and 30's. The usual collection for the parish is taken, as is a second collection for the Restoration fund on the first Sunday of the month; John Main is baptised in 1926; attention is drawn to special events at the Cathedral; Bishop's Visitation is an occasion to meet the Bishop in private(!) in the sacristy; general communion is proclaimed in virtue of the visitation in 1928; prayers for the sick and the dead rub shoulders with notices about the farthing fund; masses continue to grow in number to four on Sundays; the Second War comes and the pattern of prayer and devotion continues unabated; a note thanking God for the safety of the King and Queen as Buckingham Palace is bombed; a short note recommending that people come to confession on Saturday evenings in the daylight hours as shrapnel splinters make it difficult during night raids(!); 17 children are making their first communion; gratitude for the help of the Sisters of St. Joseph's; a free party for the Hendon youth (see poster on the air-raid shelter!); the record of ordinary parish, Catholic life goes on despite all.

With Fr. Goggin resigning in 1938 through ill-health a change of priest takes place and Canon Coote takes over as "parochus". Mgr. Coote, who had been private Secretary to Cardinal Bourne for many years, was responsible for the construction of the present High Altar. The first Mass said at this altar was on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, 11th February 1938. Mgr Coote was also responsible for much of the stained glass windows. Aply assisted by Fr. De Felice for nearly 20 years, Mgr Coote finally died in 1961 and was replaced for a short period of time by Fr. Patrick Casey. Fr. Casey had the church redecorated and the painting of the Immaculate Conception hung in the south transept. He was then appointed as Vicar General and later Auxiliary Bishop in Westminster. He finally moved as Bishop to Brentwood in 1969. (And died in 1999).

And so to a more remembered time .

Fr. Joseph Anthony Carr, who had been a curate in Hendon, was made parish priest in 1964. During his time the parish, (which had originally stretched to Wembley, Willesden, Kingsbury, Kenton, Harrow, Stanmore, Mill Hill and beyond in 1849) was divided into Hendon and West Hendon. This took place in 1964 and St. Patrick's was

opened firstly as a chapel of ease and finally as a separate parish. Then on the 25th March 1966, the Feast of the Annunciation, the church was solemnly Consecrated by Bishop Casey. The actual consecration took place at 4.30pm followed by the consecrating of the Lady Altar by Mgr. Dunderdale and the Sacred Heart Altar by Canon Crook. Solemn High Mass took place at 6.30pm, Bishop Casey presiding. Fr. Carr was assisted over the years by a large number of curates; Fr. Anthony Gauci S.J. assisted for 25 years in the summer months; and in latter years Sr. Regina McGarry O.P. was parish sister.

In 1990 Fr. Carr retired and Canon Vincent Berry took over as parish priest. The church was redecorated, and the necessary repairs made to the roof. When Canon Berry left in 1996 to move to the parish of Chelsea, Fr. Anthony Scurlock came as parish priest and brought with him Paddy, the sheepdog. After a short period of twenty months, Fr. Scurlock was replaced by Fr. Francis Press until 2009, who was succeeded by Fr Dominic Byrne until 2018, at which time the care of the Parish passed to Fr Tim Edgar. Many of the religious houses that once abounded in Hendon have all closed. The Benedictines who were followed in Ashley Lane by the Divine Word Missionaries, the Montfort Missionaries who bought the Poor Sisters of Nazareth Novitiate in Parson Street and subsequently let it to the Carmelites, the Holy Ghost Fathers who were in Watford Way have all left. The Sisters of The Poor Handmaids Of Jesus Christ, Srs. Anthony, Alphonsus and Imelda are an invaluable source of help in the parish, providing as they do catechetics for First Holy Communion and visitation of the sick, elderly and house-bound.

Building upon the saints of the past in this place of Hendon, we hope in our turn to pass on the "tradition of Faith" that is the inheritance that we have received from the past, from Blessed Dominic Barberi, from the people and Sisters and priests of times bygone. May the future peoples of Hendon find their Grace in this place a constant blessing in Christ and bless us in their prayers.

An Architectural tour of the church

The Original church.

In 1863 the original church, designed by Gilbert Blount and dedicated to Our Lady of Dolours in the first instance, consisted of a nave and two isles with a bell tower at the north-west corner and a sacristy, possibly where the repository is now. There were insufficient funds for an apse for the chancel, so the high altar was set against the East wall of the nave. This altar was designed by Andre, the famous archaeologist, in Florentine workmanship and was of dark brown wood relieved by gold ornament. Above the high altar was a fine Calvary. On the right was the Lady Chapel containing the original altar at which Blessed Dominic Barberi had celebrated the first Mass in 1849. On the left was the Sacred Heart Chapel with the altar placed against one of the windows about half-way up the aisle. At the east end of this aisle stood the patronal altar of Our Lady of Dolours with an exquisite bust in white marble of the Mother of Sorrows (Dolours) a gift from Rome of the late Cardinal Wiseman.



With the coming of greater numbers in the aftermath of the Great War, plans were put into hand to enlarge the church. The church was now over 60 years old and subsidence was evident in some places. Plans were drawn up to incorporate the old church within the existing structure. Certain areas required rebuilding and the enlarging entailed demolishing the east and west walls, and moving the interior round from east-facing to west-facing. The altar was moved accordingly, and the rose window reconstructed at the opposite end of the church as well. The new high altar incorporated the altar used by Blessed Dominic in the original Lady Chapel.



The additions therefore comprised a new sanctuary, north and south transepts, sacristy and extended West end and making a new choir gallery with organ, new porch and entrance. (At the same time a new presbytery was being built to come into the church directly from the house as now).

A Tour of the present church.

The church is built now in the Early English Gothic style and consists of nave, north and South aisles, north and south transepts, chancel and baptistry.



The building is faced with Kentish Rag Stone with buttresses, windows copings and entrances of hard white Portland Stone. The great gable end of the Sanctuary has, for it's only ornament ,a niche and canopy with a sculptured white stone statue of Our Lady of Dolours, the work of Mr. Lindsey Clark, ABR.S.

The main entrance is at the back of the church; looking towards the present altar means that in fact one is looking west. Adjacent to the entrance is the Baptistry containing the font. Above there is the choir containing the organ. The present instrument was installed in 1960 and was built by J. W. Walker and Sons. It is a two manual and pedal organ having thirty stops in all.



At the front of the church in the south aisle the bust of Our Lady may be seen now above the Lady Altar. This gift from Cardinal Wiseman is one of two items that survive from earlier buildings, the other being the bell on the outside of the church. Adjacent to the Lady Chapel is the sacristy and nearby is a picture of the Immaculate Conception presented by Father, later Bishop, Casey. The north aisle contains the Sacred Heart Chapel and in the north transept there are two statues, one of St Joseph, the other of St Anthony. The Crucifix was carved in Germany as a gift from the Benedictine Community to Mgr. Coote on the occasion of his Golden Jubilee in 1955, and in turn given to the parish.

The stained-glass windows in the church are predominantly the work of the artist Hardman. In the south aisle there are three windows put in by Canon Coote; St. Francis De Sales, in memory of Cardinal Bourne, to whom he had been Private Secretary;



the English Martyrs, in memory of Canon Carter;



and the window of thanksgiving for the preservation of the church in the Second World War dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi.



The Thérèse window in the south transept is the work of John Trinick.



The north aisle contains windows in memory of various parishioners; the murals on the second window denotes the position of the Sacred Heart Altar in the 1863 church



and the colouring was re-discovered when the church was decorated in 1994. In 1999, a new commissioned window by Matthew Lloyd-Winder was been installed. Completing the Crucifixion and Tomb windows, it is a figure of the Risen Christ in glory, a fitting Jubilee grace and crowning one millennium and looking forward to the next.

The focal point of any church is the altar and in Our Lady of Dolours there is a very fine altar constructed in "Beer" stone. It is mounted upon a Portland stone plinth and the altar itself is a single piece of Roman Marble from the San Stephanio quarries in Italy. The altar was designed by Mr. Edward J. Welters in the decorated style of Gothic architecture. Behind the altar at the back of the sanctuary are three divisions separated by stone mullions. In the outer two divisions, moulded stone panels have been inserted enclosing carved emblems of the Passion of Christ. In front of these are the two shelves recessed in the centre to receive the Tabernacle, which is flanked on either side by tracery panels with shields bearing the monogram (in Latin and Greek) "I.H.S."



Finally, above the altar, and forming a fine visual centre-piece is the "Pieta" carved by Philip Lindsey Clark D.S.O. A.R.B.S. in its present position and considered to be one of his better works. It is larger than life-size and is skillfully lit from above.

Of course, the real understanding and purpose of the building is only made clear and becomes apparent when, on any day of the week, at any quiet moment, one may come quietly into the church and pray before the Blessed Sacrament. The people of Hendon are very well provided for in this present age because of the unselfish devotion and far-sightedness of generations of local Catholics in times past and now the torch of Faith has passed briefly to us in this parish of Our Lady of Dolours.

"May He guard us all the day long, till the shades lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed and the fever of life is over and our work is done. Then in His mercy, may He give us a safe lodging and a holy rest and Peace at the last. Amen."

Prayer of Cardinal Newman, Received into the Catholic Church by Blessed Dominic Barberi.

With special thanks to Peter Kinch and Catherine Day.
Revised by Fr Tim Edgar, October 2018