

MARY CLARE BODKIN MEMOIRE



Mary Clare Eyre was the third child of John Joseph Eyre and Margareta Atkinson.

She was born on the 3rd December 1842 in Madeley, Shropshire England.

Mary Clare's older siblings Louisa (b 1839) and Edwin (b 1841) were born in Belgium. Her four younger siblings were also born in England: Teresa (b 1844 in Shropshire); Frances (b 1846 in Yorkshire); Lucy (b 1849 in Durham) and Stanislaus (b 1851 in Yorkshire).

[In the picture above: A young Mary Clare Eyre with her father John Joseph Eyre of Clifden Castle]

[In the picture below: Mary Clare Bodkin and Dr Geoffrey Bodkin (1884)]

At the age of 23 years Mary Clare Eyre eloped from Clifden Castle in Galway (Ireland), and married Dr Geoffrey Bodkin at the registry office in Galway in 1869.

They had 9 children: **Teresa Mary Bodkin; Frances Mary Magdalan Bodkin; John Joseph Bodkin; Mary Clare Bodkin; Terence William Bodkin; Geoffrey Bodkin; Lillian Bodkin; Charles Bodkin; Joseph Bodkin.**

Mary Clare Bodkin's husband Geoffrey Bodkin died at Clifden in Galway on 21st August 1894 at the age of 49 years old.

On 31st March 1901 Mary Clare was 58 years old and lived at 29 Ranelagh Mansions in Fulham, London, England. Her grandson Charles (Carlos) was 6 years old and was staying with her. Nearby at 53 Fulham Park Gardens, in Fulham, resided her eldest daughter Frances Bodkin living with her husband Edward Henry Mary Joseph Eyre and their 8 years old son Vincent. Frances Bodkin gave birth to her daughter Agnes Eyre on 31 May 1901.

Mary Clare Bodkin's sixth child Geoffrey Bodkin died in 1914 in the first 3 months of World War I at the age of 36 years onboard the HMS Cressey.

In his memory, Mary Clare Bodkin:

“bought the local rubbish tip and built the church of Our Lady there in the memory of her son. She presented a silver cup to the first baby baptised here and a suite of furniture to the first couple married. It has been a parish church ever since.”



[In the picture below: Edward Edmund Eyre]



The actual cost of building the church was paid for by Mary Clare Bodkin's second cousin Edward Edmund Eyre. Edward Edmund Eyre was widowed in 1918 after the death of his wife Caroline.

An architect is engaged and the transformation begins. Brick by brick, a church rises up on what used to be wasteland. The surroundings streets were full of families struggling to make ends meet. The menfolk were generally employed in the nearby docks. Today the sounds and smells of industry are a memory, but back when our church

began, the streets around it would have been noisy, dirty and not necessarily a place you would linger.

Stephendale Road, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, SW6

This church was opened on 17 December 1922 by Cardinal Bourne. It had the same architects as the nearby Holy Cross Church, Parsons Green, namely Fr Benedict Williamson in association with T.H.B. Scott, and both churches were paid for by Mr **Edward Eyre**.

The severe exterior of grey stock bricks is best viewed from the north (ritual west). The walls are sheer to the parapets, unbroken by a single moulding. The eye is caught therefore by the tall north-west bell-tower with its statue of Portland stone and its pyramidal copper roof. There are two recessed entrances with Portland stone capitals, and a rose window in the gable.

Inside, the impact is made by the generous disposal of space—three tall round-arched bays to the nave and chancel, with tall narrow aisles. There is a king-post roof to the nave. The original oak lining of the organ loft, piers and walls has been modified by inserted

plywood panels. The piers, lined to a height of six or seven feet, are of square plan with capitals reminiscent of early Florentine designs. There are tall, arched windows high above the aisles. Off the



9. *Stephendale Road, Our Lady*

south aisle there is an arcade of four bays, with various shallow ancillary spaces.

The former stone altar and rails have been removed, and also the painted Crucifixion. The reredos remains, however, with pilasters supporting an entablature which in turn carries six pedestals beneath a triangular pediment.

The Lady Altar also remains, similar in design to the former high altar, its frontal decorated with a cross, alpha and omega. The style of these and of other

sacred symbols, and of the pilasters, is in Williamson's Egyptian manner. The reredos is distinguished by a picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Matching the overall decor, and obviously designed by the architects are the Stations of the Cross carved in stone, and the benches supplied by Bennett.

Bibliography

The Tablet, 23 December 1922, p. 860;
Westminster Cathedral Chronicle, 1923, pp. 25-26

Many people come into our church to find peace and a sense of stillness. Our door is open to anyone who wants or needs to feel closer to God. Our church is far more than a beautiful building. It is a place where people come to be together and support one another. It is a place where spiritual journeys start and are celebrated, from baptism onwards. It is a place where people, from all over the world and all walks of life, feel they belong.

[In the picture below: Mary Clare Bodkin (left) with Frances Eyre, Agnes Hill and Joan Hill]

NINETY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY.
To-morrow (Friday) Mrs. Mary Clare Bodkin, of 124, Southsea Avenue, Leigh, will celebrate her ninety-fifth birthday. She was born on December 31st, 1842, at Madeley (Staffs) and moved when ten years of age to Clifden Castle, Connemara, which her father, Mr. John Joseph Eyre, had inherited. Her marriage to Dr. Geoffrey Bodkin took place on October 12th, 1868, and many years were spent in Aran Islands, Co. Galway, where her husband was in practice. There were five sons and four daughters. Two of the sons served in the Royal Navy during the Great War, one of whom was drowned when his ship, H.M.S. Cressy, was torpedoed by the Germans in September, 1914. Mrs. Bodkin enjoys fairly good health, and, when celebrating her birthday to-morrow, will be surrounded by some of her children, grand-children and great-grand-children, as well as many friends, to wish her "*Ad Multos Annos.*"



But what about the future? What are we here for if not to strive to keep anticipating and meeting the needs of our community?

Our world is changing fast. Spirituality is increasingly absent and a growing number of people have little opportunity to know God. We need to ensure the people of Fulham know where they can find Jesus, now and in the future. So our challenge goes beyond maintaining what we do today. For every new activity, we need volunteers and we need funding. This isn't always easy.

One hundred years on from when the foundations of our church were first laid, we will aim to build solid foundations for the financial future of our church.

With your help, we can ensure Our Lady of Perpetual Help is equipped to continue offering help to all those in our community who need it – in perpetuity.

We are the Church and without our support, our parish would stop to exist.