

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

A Parish History

1849 - 2004



The Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Weston-in-Arden, Bulkington, Warwickshire



A recent view of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church looking towards Mill Lane

***This history is dedicated to past, present and
future generations of Weston parishioners***

INTRODUCTION

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this updated Parish History dedicated to past, present, and future generations of Weston Parishioners.

A parish community is a very special place where people come together to live out their faith initiated at Baptism, to receive the Sacraments, to have a deeper awareness of what their faith means in their lives and live out the Gospel message of Christ. As a parish family, together with the priest we share in the joys and sorrows of life and hopefully support each other when difficulties arise. This parish from its humble beginnings has built up a rich tapestry of faith which has influenced the wider village community in many ways.

The following pages give us glimpse of parish life in days gone by and the people past and present who have made such a valuable contribution to its mission.

I would like to pay tribute to all the fine priests that have served this parish and have gone before us. Their hard work and dedication has been outstanding. May the Lord reward these good and faithful servants.

From the early days when there was only a handful of parishioners, the parish has grown so much over the years and is now a very vibrant place. Let us pray that this will continue to happen for many years to come. May we always remember to encourage others in the service of the Lord, "**For the Greater Glory of God.**"

Finally, I would like to thank Michael Martin for all his hard work in compiling this Parish History, Rev. Dr. John Sharp B.A., M.Th., Ph.D., at the Diocesan Archives for his assistance, Dr. David Lawrence, the Wolvey Local History Group and to all the parishioners for their contributions.

**Fr Michael D Gamble S.T.B.
Parish Priest
December 2004**

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Bulkington, Warwickshire CV12 9RU. Visit our website at WWW.OLSHWESTON.ORG*



A current map of the parish boundary

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The Parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

Christianity in Weston-in-Arden began many centuries ago. What is now the village of Bulkington began as three separate and distinct communities; Bulkington, Ryton and Weston-in-Arden. The Anglican Parish Church of St. James in the centre of Bulkington dates back to the 12th century and with associated chapels at Weston, Barnacle, Ryton, Marston, Shilton, Ansty and Bramcote, was founded by the de Waterville family. The manor house, chapel and lands at Weston owned by Roger de Waterville passed to his nephew, Ernald de Bois (de Boys). No traces of the old chapel at Weston remain but the original manor house probably occupied the present site of Weston Hall. The ownership of the estate passed in turn to the Cantilupe, Zouche and eventually to the de Bary family.

O Lord, help us all to fall in love
With everything that comes from up above.
Fill my heart with loving care
For your children everywhere,
Will you stay, Lord, in Weston with me?

O Lord, you baptise me through your priest,
Forgive my sins and bring me to your feast;
How I long to love you most
In the mystery of your Host,
Will you stay, Lord, in Weston with me?

For if you stay with me, O Lord, I know
Within my soul your hidden Life will glow,
And my friends will stop and stare
When they know that you are there,
Will you stay, Lord, in Weston with me?

Fr. Charles C. Ross (1973)

Following Catholic Emancipation in 1829, the Catholic Church in England entered a momentous period. It was during this time that an important event took place in the quiet



hamlet of Weston-in-Arden. In 1842, the owner of Weston Hall and its extensive estate, Mr Richard Brome de Bary, was received into the Catholic Church with his wife and three young children. Soon afterwards, in an upstairs room at Weston Hall, Mr and Mrs de Bary founded a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Bethlehem. This mission was served by the Dominican Fathers from nearby Hinckley. In 1854 the mission had its first resident priest, Fr Peter Sablon O.P. who lived at Weston Hall and from there served both Weston and Nuneaton. The embryonic parish continued to grow and in 1869 Richard Lerins de Bary, son of Richard Brome de Bary, sponsored the building of a new Catholic Church in Mill Lane opposite the entrance to Weston Hall. This new church was the first in England to be dedicated to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and had as its first priest, Fr Anselm Bertrand Gurdon.

We begin our recent parish history with the arrival of Father Joseph B. Hickson to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in January 1928. During his tenure at Weston, Fr. Hickson researched the history of our parish and published his findings in the booklet '*A Catholic History of Weston-in-Arden*'. This remarkable story traces the parish from its beginnings at Weston Hall, through the years to 1869 when the present church was built and ends with the diamond jubilee of the church on 8th September 1929. This very readable booklet is reproduced here in Part 1 of our history.

Since 1929 the parish has grown and flourished like never before. Our Catholic community now boasts a population of 900 and an average Mass attendance of 250 people. Part 2 of this new booklet is designed to bring our parish history up to date in the pictures and memories of those priests and parishioners who have lived through the past 75 years.

(Left above) Detail from the stained glass window, situated above the church door, depicting Our Lady of the Sacred Heart with two 'MR' monograms on the sidelights. The window was sponsored by the Union of Catholic Mothers and installed by John Hardman Studios of Warley in 1978.

(Top right) Our Parish Hymn written in 1973 by the late Fr Charles Ross while he was Parish Priest at Weston.

The Feast of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

The feast of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart is celebrated nowadays on the last Saturday of May and has its origin in a promise made to Our Blessed Lady by two young French priests devoted since their seminary days to the glory of the Sacred Heart and the honour of the Immaculate Mother of God. They had long thought of founding in France a Congregation consecrated to the Heart of Jesus.

On the very day on which Pius IX proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, these two priests finished a novena to Our Lady which was to decide the question of their life and their apostolate. They sought Our Lady's help and promised to consecrate themselves to the Heart of Jesus under the name of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and to procure a special honour for Mary. A generous and anonymous benefaction made under remarkable circumstances enabled the two priests to realise their ambition, and on September 9th 1855, the first members of the Congregation received officially the title of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. After much prayer, the Founder, Father Chevalier, in fulfilment of the rest of the promise, felt impelled to invoke the Blessed Virgin under the new title of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. This invocation inscribed for the first time on the pedestal of a statue of the Immaculate Virgin became the title under which Mary received in 1860 the dedication of an altar in the first church of the Order.

**Remember,
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart,
the great things the Lord has done for you.
He chose you for his Mother.
He wanted you close to his cross.
He gives you a share in his glory.
He listens to your prayer.
Offer him our prayers of praise and
thanksgiving;
present our petitions to him.
Let us live like you
in the love of your Son
that his Kingdom may come.
Lead all men
to the source of living water
that flows from his heart,
spreading over the world
hope and salvation
justice and peace.
See our trust in you;
answer our prayer.
Show yourself always our Mother.
Amen.**



Father Arthur Wall, Parish Priest of Bedworth 1916-1929 and Weston-in-Arden and Wolvey 1916-1927. A keen rider and a member of the Atherstone Hunt, he was often seen on horseback around the parish.

The Debary (de Bary) Family of Weston Hall

The Manor of Weston-in-Arden has a long and interesting history. The earliest records tell us that one Roger de Waterville was Lord of the Manor of Bulkington in 1143 and on his death, the estate passed to his nephew Ernald de Bois. Six generations later in 1313, William de Bois still held the manor and lands which was now centred at the hamlet of Weston-in-Arden.

The manor then passed via the Cantilupe family to the Zouche family where it remained until Edward, Lord Zouche sold the estate to Humphrey Davenport and Richard Bucknam in 1580. Later in 1589 Davenport sold to Sir Christopher Yelverton. In 1655 Sir Henry Yelverton sold to Sir Richard Samwell of Upton, Northamptonshire and on his death the estate passed to his son Richard. In 1710 Sir Thomas Samwell sold the estate to John Hayward. The Hayward family would later provide the link to the Debary family.

By 1735 one half of the manor was owned by Mary Hayward which in turn passed to Richard Hayward in 1769. The other half was owned by George Purefoy whose son Gamaliel sold his share to Anthony Stoughton in 1652. This share in turn passed to George Stoughton and to James Money, his son-in-law in 1769. In 1785 William Money, son of James and Richard Hayward were joint Lords of the Manor.

Ann Hayward, the daughter of Richard Hayward, married Rev Peter Debary who was Anglican vicar of the parish of St Peter in Hurstbourne Tarrant, near Newbury from 1755 to his death in 1814. The earliest records show the spelling of the family name as 'Debary' and later as 'de Bary.' Peter was born in 1724 and studied at Trinity College, Cambridge where he obtained his B.A. in 1745 and M.A. in 1749. He was ordained in 1748. The couple had five children, Ann, Sarah, Peter, Susannah and Mary.

In 1800, Peter Debary, his wife Ann (nee Hayward) and Thomas Weston were joint Lords of the Manor though it is unlikely that the Debarys ever lived at Weston Hall. Peter was kept busy with his parish and indeed from 1772 managed a second parish at Burbage, Wiltshire as well as his own in Hurstbourne Tarrant. While resident in the village, the Debary family became friends with Jane Austen and are frequently mentioned in Jane's letters to her sister. Peter died at the age of 90 in 1814 and is buried along with Ann his wife and their daughters Sarah, Ann and Susannah in the churchyard. In the chancel of St Peter's church a plaque bears the following inscription.

"Sacred to the memory of Sarah, youngest daughter of the late Rev Peter Debary and Ann his wife, who departed this life 7th January 1823. Also of Ann her eldest sister who died 11th September 1834. Also of Susannah their sister who died 9th October 1844 aged 89."

Their remaining daughter Mary died aged 88 in Surrey in 1854. Peter and Ann's only son Peter (junior) was born in 1764 and followed a similar path to his father. He too studied at Trinity College, Cambridge where he obtained a B.A. in 1787, M.A. in 1790 and B.D. in 1830. He was ordained Anglican priest at Westminster on 21st September 1790. From 1788-1796 he was usher at Westminster School, Rector of Eversley, Hampshire 1806-1823, Vicar of Aysgarth, Yorkshire 1824-1830 and Rector of Orwell, Cambridgeshire 1830-1835. It seems that Peter (junior) never married though he did inherit his mother's share of the Weston estate and did live at Weston Hall probably from 1835 until his death in 1841 aged 77. Like the rest of the Debary family he is honoured in St Peter's church in Hurstbourne Tarrant where the following inscription can be seen in the chancel.

"Sacred to the memory of Rev Peter Debary B.D. of Weston-in-Arden, Warwickshire late Senior Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. He died 9th October 1841 aged 77."

On the death of Peter Debary (junior), the Weston estate passes to Richard Brome de Bary and Thomas Weston as joint lords. Richard was the son of Richard Debary, a successful

solicitor of Lincolns Inn Fields, Camden, London. Born in 1777, he married Anne Phoebe Downman, daughter of the painter John Downman, on 22nd February 1810. Anne died in January 1826 and Richard in February 1829 aged 52.

Richard Brome de Bary was born in 1813 and married Elizabeth Letitia Holcombe at St George's, Bloomsbury on 21st February 1839. Elizabeth was born in 1817, the youngest daughter of Lt. Col. Holcombe C.B. In 1840, Richard was called to the Bar and became a successful barrister. Two years later in 1842, Richard with his wife and three children was received into the Catholic Church. Soon afterwards the family established a Catholic mission in Weston Hall consisting of an upstairs chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Bethlehem. The mission was served by the Dominican Fathers at nearby Hinckley.

The de Bary conversion stemmed from the Oxford Movement, an affiliation of High Church Anglicans, most of whom were members of the University of Oxford, who sought to demonstrate that the Church of England was a direct descendant of the Christian church established by the Apostles. It was also known as the Tractarian Movement after its series of publications 'Tracts for the Times' (1833–1841). Prominent members were John Henry Newman, a fellow of Oriel College, Oxford and vicar of the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, John Keble, Archdeacon Henry Edward Manning, Richard Hurrell Froude, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Robert Wilberforce, Isaac Williams, and Sir William Palmer.

Elizabeth de Bary died at Weston Hall in 1853 after a period of declining health and in accordance with her expressed wish she was buried at the Dominican Convent at Clifton. Richard was buried in Bruges, Belgium where he died in 1858.

The couple's eldest son Richard Lerins de Bary inherited the Weston estate following the death of his parents. He is also registered as sole Lord of the Manor of Weston in 1874. Born in 1841, he married Mary Pauline Mostyn on 7th October 1862. The couple had six surviving children; Richard Brome born in 1866 at Weston Hall; Peter Hildebrand Pius born 1868 at Weston Hall; John Louis Hubert born 1871 at Weston Hall; Mary Pauline born 1872 in Reigate, Surrey; Mary Angela born 1873 in Galway, Ireland and Michael born 1878 in Bruges, Belgium. Both Mary Pauline and Mary Angela became Roman Catholic nuns.

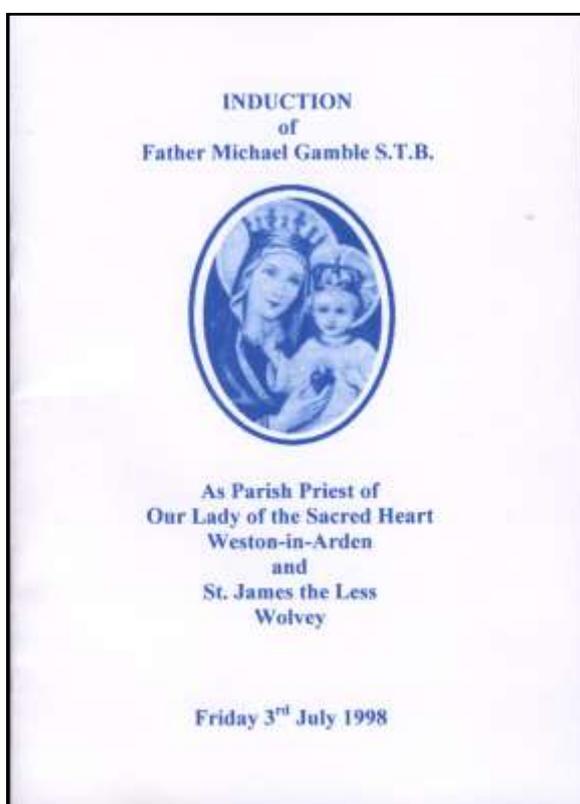
In September 1869, a new Roman Catholic Church was opened next to Weston Hall in Mill Lane. Largely the gift of Richard Lerins de Bary, the church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart had as its first priest Father Anselm Gurdon. Until the 1890s this church remained something of a private chapel for the de Bary family who sponsored the priests who served the church. From 1892 to 1927 the embryonic parish was served from nearby Bedworth. Following the death of Richard Lerins de Bary at Weston Hall in 1891, de Bary influence declined at Weston-in-Arden. The manor and estate was bought by Francis A. Newdigate of Arbury Hall, Nuneaton who is recorded as Lord of the Manor of Weston from 1891 to 1920. Evidently F.A. Newdigate did not live at Weston Hall as the 1901 Census records only servants as being in residence. In 1920 the manor and estate was bought by Lt. Col. F. B. Leyland who was the last private owner. During World War II the Hall was used as a local base for the Home Guard. Following the death of Lt. Col. Leyland in 1958, Weston Hall fell into decline until it became a hotel. With its seven acres it is presently owned by Best Western Hotels, Clifton Moor, Yorkshire.

Father Michael D. Gamble S.T.B.

Michael D. Gamble is a native of Coventry. Following his studies at Oscott College where he obtained his Bachelor of Sacred Theology (S.T.B.) degree, he was ordained in the church of St Thomas More, Coventry in January 1996. Fr. Michael spent his early priesthood at St John Fisher Church, Tiverton Road, Wyken, Coventry. Following the death of Fr Terry Luxon in March 1998, he was appointed Parish Priest at Weston-in-Arden.

On Friday 3rd July 1998, Fr Michael's Mass of Induction took place. Conducted by the late Canon William M. Roughan, Dean of Rugby and delegate for the Archbishop of Birmingham, Maurice Couve de Murville, the church at Weston was filled to overflowing when the Formula of Induction was read.

"I am mandated to inaugurate you, Michael Darren Gamble, as Parish Priest of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in the Archdiocese of Birmingham, with all the rights, duties and obligations attaching thereto. May the power of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit support you and be with you in all your tasks."



These words spoken by the Dean emphasised not only the commitment of the newly appointed Parish Priest but also the loyalty and support of the entire parish community.

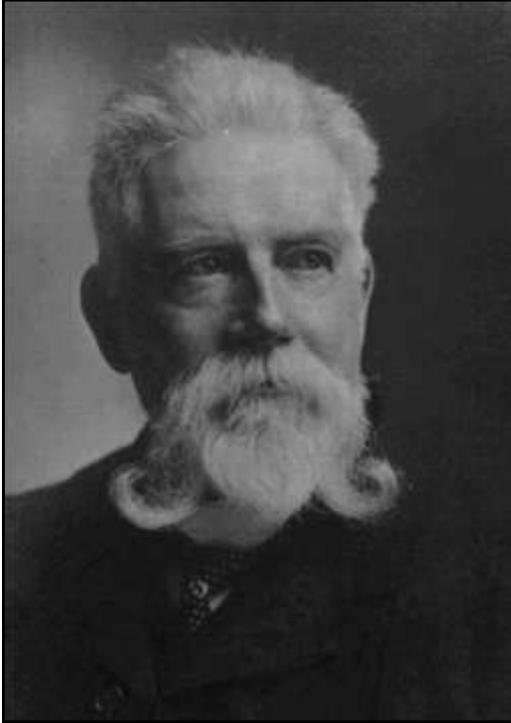
The earliest recorded Induction ceremony at Weston took place in April 1928, when Father Joseph B. Hickson was installed as Parish Priest by Canon Godfrey. The tiny congregation was supplemented by many Nuneaton parishioners and the reception afterwards was held in a disused coach house at Weston Hall.

Since its foundation, Weston has been fortunate in the many fine priests who have served the parish and Father Michael Gamble is no exception. Later in this publication we will describe these men who gave so much of their lives to the cause of Catholicity in the parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Weston-in-Arden.

Priests who have served the parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Weston-in-Arden

1849	Fr. Augustine Proctor O.P. (from Hinckley)
1849-1850	Fr. James Augustine Maltus O.P. (from Hinckley)
1850-1854	Fr. Bernard Morewood O.P. (from Hinckley) Fr. John Perry (from Hinckley) Father John Aloysius Dent O.P. (from Hinckley)
1854-1855	Fr. Peter Sablon O.P.
1855-1866	(Mission closed)
1866-1869	Fr. Henry Formby O.P. (from Hinckley)
1869-1870	Fr. Anselm Bertrand Gurdon
1870-1877	Fr. William Hilton (from Nuneaton)
1877-1880	Fr. Louis Weldon O.P.
1880-1888	Franciscan Fathers (from Nuneaton)
1888-1889	Fr. Aloysius Darras C.R.P.
1889-1892	Fr. Francis Laborde C.R.P.
1892-1927	(Served from Bedworth)
1927	Fr. Seward
1928-1931	Fr. Joseph Bernard Hickson
1931-1933	Fr. Daniel A. Daly
1933-1936	Fr. Paul M. Clark
1937-1939	Fr. William Connick
1939-1940	Fr. Joseph Purcell
1940-1941	Fr. Gerald J. Adams
1941-1966	Fr. Isaac William Savin
1966-1972	Fr. Terence Thomas Smith
1972-1984	Fr. Charles Christopher Ross
1984	Fr. Peter John Moore
1984-1985	Fr. John Richard Watkins
1986-1998	Fr. Terence Anthony Luxon
1998	Fr. Stephen Philip Day M.A.
1998 -	Fr. Michael D. Gamble S.T.B.

Inside Our Parish Church



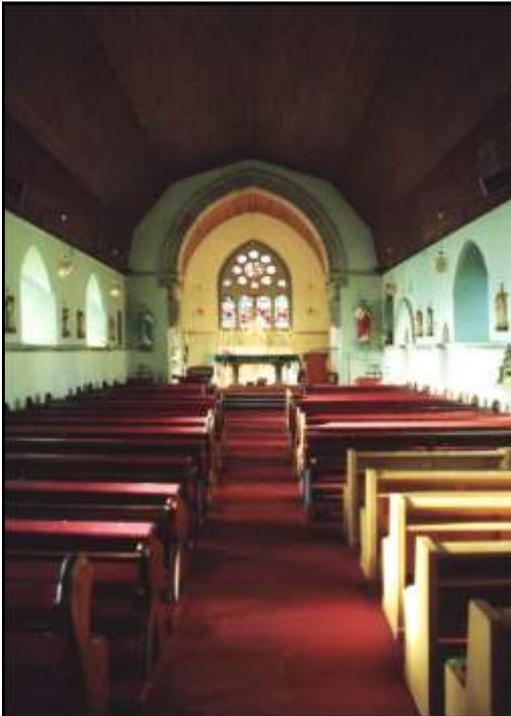
Gualbert Saunders (1837-1923), whose picture is shown on the left, was closely associated with the de Bary family of Weston Hall. In the 1860s he was chosen as the architect of the new Catholic Church in Mill Lane dedicated to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. It was his own company, Saunders & Co., that made the magnificent Rosary Window above the High Altar. Though his work was to a very high standard, Saunders only other church was St. Fidelis, Erith, Kent which has been demolished in recent years.

The Rosary window is dated 30th July 1869 and was sponsored by Mr. Philip Gurdon (brother-in-law of Fr. Anselm B. Gurdon) in memory of his wife Mary who died at Atherstone during the building of the church.

Completed in 1869, the Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart has seen many changes during the last 135 years.

By 2001, the stonework surrounding the Rosary Window showed signs of deterioration so it was decided to replace the stone and have the stained glass cleaned and restored. The work began in April and was completed by June 2001.

During the Festival of Flowers on Saturday June 23rd 2001, His Grace the Archbishop of Birmingham, Vincent Nichols blessed the newly restored window following the Vigil Mass for the Feast of St. John the Baptist. A brass plaque under the window was unveiled to mark the occasion.



The centre roundel of the Rosary Window (above) depicts the coronation of Our Lady, Queen of Heaven.

The roundels surrounding the centre are of angels playing medieval instruments (left).



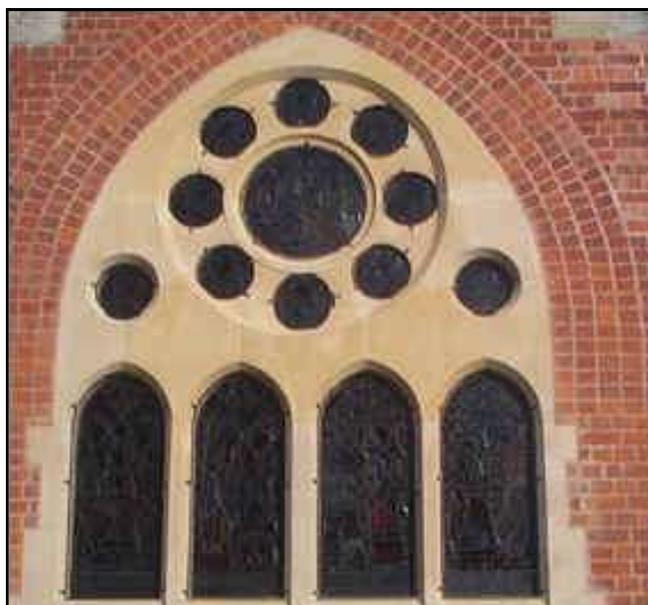


Pictures showing individual panels from the Rosary Window.

The four lower panels show the Mysteries of the Rosary; Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity (left) and the Descent of the Holy Spirit (below).

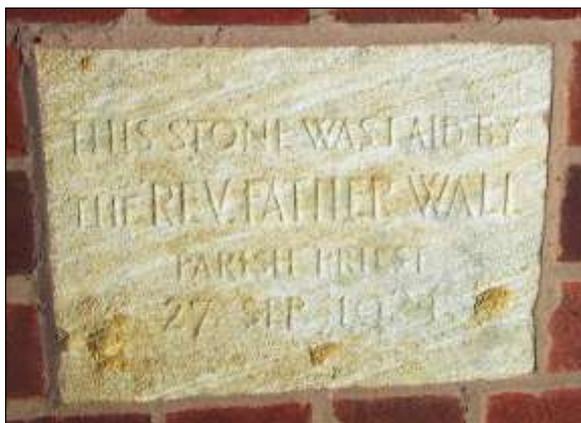
The left and right roundels are of St. Joachim and St. Anne.

(Bottom left) Exterior view of the newly restored stonework surrounding the Rosary Window.



The Chapel of St James the Less, Wolvey

A mission has existed in the village of Wolvey since 1889. Because Weston and Wolvey had no Parish Priest from 1892 to 1927, they were served from nearby Bedworth. In 1891 the Coape-Arnold family of Wolvey Hall opened a Chapel at the Hall which served the Catholic residents of the area until the early 1920s when a site for a new Catholic Chapel was found in Coventry Road. The foundation stone for the Chapel of St James the Less was laid on 27th September 1924 by Father Arthur G. Wall, Parish Priest of Bedworth (1916-1929). For many years Sunday Mass was celebrated at the Wolvey Chapel, renovated in the 1990s under the direction of the Parish Priest, the late Fr Terry Luxon.



St James the Less, so called to distinguish him from the other apostle of the same name who was the son of Zebedee, was the son of Alphaeus and cousin of Jesus. He became Bishop of Jerusalem and was martyred in 62 AD. His feast day is on 3rd May.



Top right: The foundation stone dated 1924.

Above left: Exterior view of the Catholic Chapel at Wolvey Hall built in 1890/91 by H.F.J. Coape-Arnold who is seen here with his wife Mary Genevieve and five of their twelve children. (Photo courtesy of Wolvey Local History Group)

Above (right): The Chapel of St James the Less in Coventry Road, Wolvey photographed in December 2004.



Above: Interior view of the Catholic Chapel at Wolvey Hall. Designed in the Gothic style, it had seats for ninety people. (Photo courtesy of Wolvey Local History Group from their publication 'Old Photographs from the Villages' ISBN 0-954671-0-X available from the Group at www.wolvey-history.org.uk/publications.htm)

Father Joseph Bernard Hickson

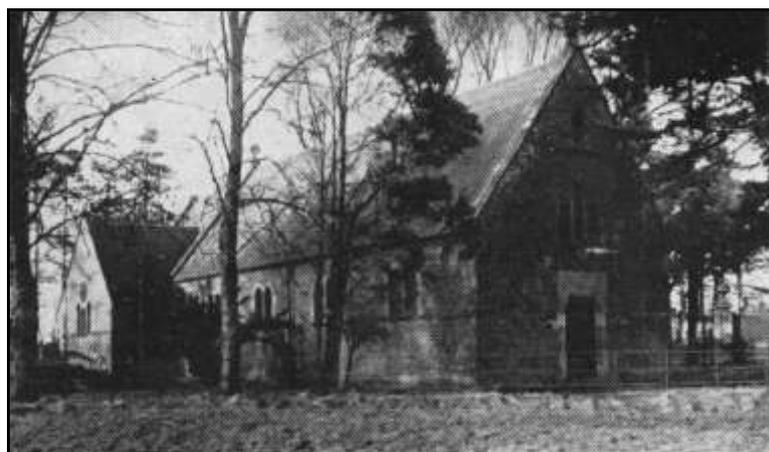
Joseph B. Hickson was born on 22nd October 1895 in Walsall. His early school days were spent at St. Patrick's and later from 1909 to 1915, at Cotton College, North Staffordshire.

Cotton College began as the Sedgley Park School in 1793. Founded by Bishop Challoner, it remained at Wolverhampton until 1873 when it moved to Cotton Hall, near Oakamoor, Stoke-on-Trent. Cotton Hall was originally the home of the Gilbert family until 1843 when it was bought by the Earl of Shrewsbury. It then passed to the Birmingham Diocese in 1857 when it became a preparatory school for Sedgley Park until the school finally moved to Cotton Hall in 1873.

Fr. Hickson was ordained on 14th May 1922 at the age of 26 and served as Assistant Priest at the parishes of Burslem (1922-1923), Stone (1923-1926) and Wednesbury (1926-1928). His first appointment as Parish Priest was to Weston-in-Arden where he remained from 1928 to 1931. He describes his arrival in Weston. *"It was early in January of 1928 that I received my appointment and first saw Weston. The country was not at its best, and as I cycled there from Bedworth on a borrowed machine I fervently hoped that I was seeing Weston at its worst."*

Catholic Church, Weston in-Arden.	
A Voluntary Contribution of 3d. to the funds of the above Mission. The following gifts will be distributed amongst the contributors, who will be notified by post, December 9th, 1927.	
1 Ensign Hand Camera	8 Bottle of Port
2 Gift, value 10s.	9 Couple of Fowls
3 Half Tea Service	10 Gift, value 5s.
4 Large Iced Cake	11 Cut Glass Fruit Set
5 Box of 50 Cigarettes	12 Half-do. Stainless Spoons
6 Baby's Knitted Wool Coat	13 Pork Pie
7 Half-do. Stainless Knives	14 Cut Glass Honey Jar
Counterfoils and cash to be returned not later than December 6th, 1927, to Revd. Fr. Seward, The Presbytery, Weston-in-Arden, Nuneaton; or to Miss Buck, Weston in Arden, Nuneaton.	

A fund-raising event in 1927 at Weston during the tenure of Father Seward.



This early photograph of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart shows the church as it was in Fr. Hickson's time. In 1977 a new porch was built on the front of the church. The following year a new window dedicated to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was installed above the main door. A Grotto dedicated to Our Lady was built, by parishioners, to the left of St. Joseph's Chapel in 1990.

Weston and Wolvey had been served from nearby Bedworth since 1892. In September 1927 our parish had its first resident priest for 35 years when Fr. Seward, a New Zealander, who had arrived in England in the hope of establishing a brotherhood, arrived in Weston. This hope was not realised and Fr. Seward, a seasoned traveller, returned to New Zealand after ten weeks.

Fr. Hickson soon began a parish revival that culminated in the celebration of the diamond jubilee of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church on 8th September 1929. While at Weston, he wrote a history of the parish which still survives today in our Parish Library and is reproduced on the following pages. On leaving Weston in 1931, Fr. Hickson was presented with a Testimonial Fund, collected by parishioners, of £14 6s 9d (£14.34p), worth nearly £600 in today's value. From Weston, he went to Cannock (1931-1955) and then to Sutton Coldfield (1955). During his last years he suffered from spinal arthritis which he bore with great dignity. He died in 1965.

A Parish History

Part 1

1849 - 1929



*Fr. Joseph B. Hickson and altar servers in 1928
Back row (left to right): L.Liggins, P.Ruck, N.Wilson, F.Goode
Front row (left to right): H.Liggins, Fr. Hickson, S.Ward, ?Morris*

A Catholic History of Weston-in-Arden by Rev. J. B. Hickson

gratefully and affectionately dedicated to the memory of
HENRY JAMES REGAN
convert pupil of Sedgley Park School,
zealously devoted to the cause of
Catholicity and to his native and much beloved Weston

A CATHOLIC HISTORY OF WESTON-IN-ARDEN

Anyone journeying by way of the bus route between Coventry and Lichfield, may well have wondered, certainly ten years ago [1934], at the presence of a church just beyond the village of Bulkington.

The church at that time had quite a picturesque setting and its situation opposite the gates of an Elizabethan mansion, gives the clue, if not to its identity, at any rate to its origin.

Seventy-five years ago, Weston Hall and the little church we are speaking of were very closely related. In those days the Hall was the home of a Catholic family, the church then as now the home of the Blessed Sacrament; a centre of Catholic Faith and worship provided by the generosity of the de Bary family of Weston Hall.

Traces of Weston's earlier Catholicity are to be found in the history of Bulkington's parish church nearby, dedicated to St. James. Restored in 1866, the present stone structure of more than average size but of no special beauty, is chiefly the work of the close of the fourteenth century. Its list of "vicars" dates back to 1258, its parish register to 1606.

Of Bulkington, from which Weston derives its name, viz., West of Bulkington, a local antiquary has written as follows:

"Just as the citizens of Coventry owe foundations of the spiritual and temporal blessings they now enjoy to the piety of the nuns and monks - St. Osburg, Leofric and Godiva - so in the case of Bulkington the foundation of the church is there due to a member of the Waterville family and not unlikely was built by the monks of Leofric's noble priory of Coventry." (A. Edward Treen in the *Coventry Standard*, August 5th 1904.)

In Domesday Book, Bulkington is called Bockintone. After referring to Bockintone and its Saxon owners, the same writer continues:

"We find nothing further touching this place until the year 1143, or the eighth year of the reign of King Stephen. At that time Roger de Waterville appears to have been lord of the manor and gave the church here, which I take it had been only recently built and endowed, together with the chapels of Bernangle (Barnacle), Weston, Ryton, Merston (Marston), Shilton, Ansty and Bramcote, with two yards land in Bulkington, to the newly founded Abbey of St. Mary's de Pratis in Leicester. This Roger de Waterville appears to have left the manor of this village with the hamlet of Weston and its manor house there situated to his nephew, Ernald de Bois. The de Bois family held the manor during four generations. They resided at or on the site of the present Hall at Weston adjoining which a chapel formerly existed, all traces of which are gone."

Because of this family's association with the place, Weston in the time of Henry VI was known as Weston Arnold, to distinguish it from other Westons in the county. A little more than two centuries ago, according to one account, the arms of the de Bois, or de Boys family were depicted in the east window of Bulkington Church, and a member of the same family, kneeling in full armour, was shown in the north window. In the same account it is suggested that Shakespeare may have had this family in mind when he wrote "As you like it" in which Orlando and Oliver are described as sons of Sir Rowland de Bois. The fact that the action of the play is largely cast in the Forest of Arden provides further reason for the suggestion.

From the last of the de Bois, the Manor of Bulkington passed to the Cantilupe family, in whose possession it remained for two generations. One owner of this family rose to the See of Worcester in the thirteenth century. His recumbent figure is still in the Lady Chapel of that cathedral. From Milicent de Cantilupe the estate passed to the Zouche family, in whose possession it continued during ten generations, Edward de la Zouche who died June 6th in the ninth year of Elizabeth (1568), being the last owner of that line. It is related by the

Warwickshire historian, Dugdale, that "one William de la Zouche wishing to possess himself of a meadow contiguous to his estate, invited the inhabitants of Bulkington to a feast and entertained them with considerable hospitality; after which they all agreed to surrender their rights but one Rogers, on which he said, 'let the churl keep his piece', and to this day the piece of land thus referred to, is called the churl's piece". In more recent years the phrase has, I think, been corrupted into Charles' piece.

According to Dugdale, "In the reign 19 of Edward the 3rd, William de la Zouche had licence for amortising eight messuages nine yard land and a half and 30s. annual rent with the appurtenances lying at Claybrook and Leir Leicestershire; at Weston-in-Arden and other places, for the maintenance of two priests to sing Mass daily in the chapel of Our Lady within his manor of Weston for the good estate of himself whilst he lived and for the health of his soul after he should depart this world, as also for the soul of William Danet and for the souls of the father and mother with the ancestors and heirs of the said William de la Zouche and William Danet and all the faithful deceased.

"Concerning which the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield upon his order thereof the ensuing year declared:

" 'That there having been a chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary within the manor of Weston and therein divine service celebrated time out of mind which being grown ruinous was then newly fallen down, Sir William de la Zouche of Harrington Kt. had rebuilt the same with a fair fabric in honour of the Blessed Virgin, for the good estate of himself as also of Sir William de la Zouche of Totnes, and the Lady Elizabeth his wife with their children during this life and afterwards for the health of their souls and for the souls of William de Boys, Sir Eudo la Zouche, Melicent de Montall, Maud la Zouche, Elene la Zouche and their children departed this life and for the souls of William Danet and Richard Dobyn and other benefactors with all the faithful deceased.' "

The Yelvertons and Haywards, the Purefeys and Stantons of Warwick, the Bromes, de Barys and Westons are family names which appear subsequent to the Zouche ownership of the estate.

In common then with so many other parts of rural England, Weston can boast its Catholicity of bygone days. Though I have carefully investigated every likely source of information about the long intervening period that follows, it is a matter of keen regret that I have been unable to discover anything relevant to Weston's Catholic history.

What may be described as the *Second Spring of Catholicity at Weston*, dates from the year 1842.

At that time resident at Weston Hall and the owner of the extensive Weston Hall estate, Mr. Richard Brome de Bary, was with his wife and three young children received into the Church. Mrs. Brome de Bary was from the Highlands and claimed descent from St. Margaret of Scotland and St. Ferdinand of Spain.

Gillow's Bibliographical Dictionary of the English Catholics speaks of de Bary or Debary Richard, B., Esq., as a convert, during the Oxford Tractarian Movement, and mentions two small works he wrote; the one entitled "A charm against Chaotism, comprising Thoughts on Education and the Expediency of Instituting Public Games." Lond. 1839: the other, "Thoughts upon certain leading points of Difference between the Catholic and Anglican Churches." Lond. 1843. His name is also to be found in O'Gorman's book of the Oxford Converts.

We find the following reference to Mr. and Mrs. de Bary's conversion in Father Raymund Palmer's "Anglia Dominicana", written between 1870 and 1890: "In 1842, Richard Brome de Bary, Esq., of Weston-in-Arden, Warwickshire, a gentleman of independent fortune, was received into the Church, in which step he was erelong followed by Mrs. de Bary ... In order to extend the Faith, he determined to establish and support a mission at his residence Weston

Hall, seven miles from Hinckley. The Dominican Fathers undertook the charge, and on October the tenth 1849, the chapel of St. Mary was opened by the Provincial (Father Augustine Procter) assisted by the community of Hinckley. The mission was soon committed to Father James Augustine Maltus, and was regularly served on all Sundays and Holydays."

I have spoken of the "Second Spring" of Weston's Catholicity. One has heard much of the vitality, the glory even of those days of Weston's ancient faith revived, to which "The Life of Mother Margaret Hallahan" so amply testifies. But as one looks back over what may be regarded as Weston's chequered career, one wonders whether Cardinal Newman's further development of the idea of the Second Spring has not also been exemplified - "But still could we be surprised. . . . if the winter even now should not yet be quite over? Have we any right to take it strange if, in this English land, the springtime of the Church should turn out to be an English spring; an uncertain, anxious time of hope and fear, of joy and suffering, of bright promise and budding hopes, yet withal of keen blasts and cold showers and sudden storms". Over a period of some 80 years, during eight of which the mission was closed, Weston had resident priests for only 8 or 9 years.

This second period of Weston's Catholicity opens at a time which was, of course, truly momentous in the Catholic history of England. The Church in this country had scarcely had time to realise her newfound Emancipation, "the English Catholics having hardly emerged from the long depression of the penal times". The Restoration of the Hierarchy not far distant, was yet to come and with it Cardinal Newman's vision and classic description of The Second Spring.

The Mass had not yet returned to Bedworth, Weston's nearest neighbour beyond Bulkington. Coton (Nuneaton), with whose foundation in 1850 Father Austin Maltus, O.P., is credited, was at this time but a Mass centre served from Hinckley. Coton was to be served later from Weston by the Dominican Father Sablon.

Hinckley, dating from 1765, where the present church and priory were built in 1824, was, if we except Coventry, the only mission in the neighbourhood, and it is to Hinckley that Weston owes its first priests and many years of devoted service.

Of the mission of Coventry, Father (later Archbishop) Ullathorne could say when he was appointed there in 1841, "the chapel of no great age" - it was built in 1807 - "was small and plain, with large cracks in the walls. The house was so small, that there was barely space enough in the rooms for a little table and half a dozen chairs". This old world provincial town of some 30,000 inhabitants had fewer than a thousand Catholics and two months after his arrival there, Father Ullathorne recorded that he was soon to receive twelve converts.

In what the Archbishop describes as the early time of transition from the old chapels to churches, the foundation stone of St. Osburg's Church was laid in 1843 and the church consecrated in 1845. A year later it was to be the scene of Father Ullathorne's consecration as Bishop. "The time when Dr. Ullathorne was raised to the episcopate was the moment when the crest of the highest wave of the Oxford Movement had just broken and Newman and his inner circle of disciples were being received into the Church in numbers."

Mention of Coventry and of Father Ullathorne's work there, instinctively reminds one of Mother Margaret Hallahan, "Foundress of a Congregation of the great Dominican Order". Mother Margaret, who came to Coventry from Bruges in the year of Mr. de Bary's reception into the Church, was a close friend of Mr. and Mrs. de Bary and a frequent visitor to Weston. Dom Butler says in his "Life and Times of Bishop Ullathorne" that popular devotions were little in vogue in Coventry, or at all in England and that it was greatly owing to Mother Margaret's initiative that Coventry under Father Ullathorne was the first place in England where many of these Catholic practices were introduced. From this it may justly be inferred that Weston was a likely second.

The Wearing of the Religious Habit in public was re-introduced about this time, by Father Ullathorne at Coventry in 1845, by the Dominicans at Hinckley in 1846, and by Father Faber at the London Oratory in 1849. "The Habit had been unknown in England since the time of Queen Mary."

Soon after Bishop Ullathorne's appointment to the Western District in 1845, he called Mother Margaret and her little Community of Dominicanesses from Coventry to Bristol. When in 1848, the Community were settled at Clifton, Mr. and Mrs. de Bary were living near the convent there. Mr. de Bary we are told in the Life of Mother Margaret, being warmly interested in the Clifton foundation, undertook to beg for funds towards the erection of the convent, and in doing so exposed himself to many insults and humiliations, thus earning the lasting gratitude of the Community. This early association with Clifton explains Mrs. de Bary's wish to be buried there and it was on her journeys from Clifton to Staffordshire that Mother Margaret visited Weston.

We learn much of Weston from Mother Margaret's life, from which I now quote extensively.

"She (Mother Margaret) visited Weston Hall where the zeal and piety of Mr. and Mrs. de Bary were producing some remarkable results. The intimate relations which existed between Mother Margaret and her saintly friends will justify us in saying a few words regarding them and their work at Weston.

"Both Mr. and Mrs. de Bary were professed Franciscan Tertiaries and from the period of their conversion to the Catholic Faith they gave themselves up to the service of God with the entire devotion of religious. Mrs. de Bary may be said to have lived for the poor people around her, and by her holy example effected the conversion of many. She more than once visited the convent at Clifton; and a letter from one of the Dominican Fathers describes how on her return from one of these visits, she was met at Bulkington station, not by a carriage and servants, but by a crowd of the poor rough young souls, boys and girls, who are so fondly attached to her and who showed their honest delight at seeing her again. How much he continues, one person can do with earnestness and quiet persevering zeal, when acting from the pure love of God. It is evidently the work of God that these poor things, who a few months ago were like mere children of nature, should now show themselves so apt for putting on the true Christian character. In some of their little ways it is amusing to see how like they are to old Catholics. It only shows how much might be done with the corresponding class of persons all over the country, if there were but some to care for them and be devoted to the cultivation of their souls.

"The owners of Weston Hall lived there in a certain style of holy and primitive simplicity. A room in the upper part of the house was arranged as a chapel for the use of the mission, which was served by one of the Dominican Fathers from Hinckley whilst the great hall was converted into a poor-school, which Mrs. de Bary taught herself."

This chapel, the simple wooden altar of which is still in the present church, was dedicated to Our Lady of Bethlehem. "It is a beautiful sight", says the same writer just quoted, "to see her in the midst of her scholars, big and little, girls and boys; some of them great fellows eighteen or nineteen years old, but all as humble and docile as children, gathered in the large square old hall of the house, which I promise you is not quite as silent as a Trappist cloister. I only hope she will not injure her health by overwork. There was an odour of antique piety about the whole establishment which charmed Mother Margaret's heart; and she often described her delight in seeing the crowds of country people who gathered there on Sundays, their hob-nailed boots making free with the oak staircase, and all their voices heartily united in singing the plain-chant Mass. For one of the striking features of the Weston congregation was that they all learnt to sing. Perhaps it was not the least powerful of the means which were used for awakening within them the religious sense and attaching them to the services of the Church. On certain days men and women, boys and girls assembled in the Hall to practise, under the direction of one of the Fathers, Mr. and Mrs. de Bary and all their household assisting. It was in the midst of one of these weekly singing meetings that Mother Margaret arrived on the occasion of her first visit, in company with Bishop Ullathorne. The unexpected sight of his Lordship and of Mother

Margaret, whose name had been made familiar to them by their Coventry friends, struck a sort of awe into the little assembly, all of whom were recent converts, unused to the spectacle of bishops or nuns. But soon they learnt to be quite as much at home with Mother Margaret as she was with them. She was edified by their simple manner, their singular piety in chapel and by their hearty singing of the Mass and especially of the plain-chant Credo, which she said, was like a living act of faith. After that time she frequently visited Weston Hall in the course of her journeys to and from Staffordshire and always met with the same affectionate welcome."

This quotation from Mother Margaret's Life is praise indeed for the work done at Weston by Mr. and Mrs. Brome de Bary. Weston may well be proud of, just as it should always be grateful to, two such benefactors. The fact that Mr. and Mrs. de Bary's friendship with Mother Margaret brought "that great soul" as Bishop Ullathorne describes her, not infrequently to Weston, is a further privilege of which Weston will never, let us hope, be unmindful.

Amongst Henry James Regan's notes I find the following: "Weston in excelsis, and I can vouch for the truth of it as I have heard it from those who lived in it. Mrs. de Bary was the champion of the poor and generous to excess. The poor were poor then and it was God help them. The district was ruled by Protestant Church and Tory farmers; tea 6/- a pound, the poor, lucky if they got an ounce a week; brown sugar 6d.; black treacle and herrings were luxuries; lard not butter and everything adulterated; coal drawn from the pits by donkeys and soupering freely done. Education: there was none for the poor; it was paid for. The only and first free education was given by Mrs. de Bary in the hall of Weston Hall and a few years ago I could have found three or four who went to school there".

The work done at the Hall in those days, Catholic Action and a Liturgical Movement however crude, if indeed it was crude, of which a later generation may well be envious, is all the more remarkable when we remember in what a short space of time it was all accomplished. Mrs. de Bary died when she was only 36 and Mr. de Bary was only 45 at the time of his death - both were Catholics for only a few years (Mrs. de Bary ten years - Mr. de Bary sixteen years). In Richard Brome de Bary's time a large devotional painting in a massive gilded frame, of St. Francis in his cell and showing portiuncula used to hang on the wall of the Hall staircase and later was placed on the epistle side of the sanctuary of the present church, it was taken down at the time of the boys' school at Weston Hall.



Father James Augustine Maltus, better known as Father Austin, whose name is the first of the priests recorded in the Weston register of baptisms, was but recently ordained, when, in 1849, he served Weston from Hinckley. In October 1850, he left for Woodchester which had just been founded and so relinquished the charge of Weston. It is said that he used to preach in the Bedworth Market Place accompanied by convert men of Weston and Coton as choir and bodyguard. One of his converts, the late Mr. Alonzo Harris, is among Weston's outstanding benefactors.

When Father Austin left, Weston's needs were administered from Hinckley by Father Bernard Morewood, O.P., Father John Perry, a secular priest, and Father John Aloysius Dent, O.P., until August 1854, when Father Peter Sablon, O.P., came to reside at Weston Hall and from Weston served Nuneaton (Coton).

Father Sablon was a Belgian. On finishing his Office as Prior of Ghent, he came to England in 1852 and was affiliated later to the English Province of the Dominican Order in which he died after many years of fruitful labour. He taught languages at the Priory School at Hinckley, of which he was made Regent. It was when the school at Hinckley closed that Father Sablon came to Weston, where he stayed for about two years. When Mr. de Bary went abroad in 1856 (Mrs. de Bary having died in 1853), Father Sablon returned to Hinckley but still continued the double charge of Weston and Nuneaton. It has been said that in Father Sablon's time it needed courage to be a Catholic, persecution was active, sneering and jibing, yet many converts were made, the nucleus of the present parishes of Weston and Bedworth. In the "Mission of St. Peter's, Hinckley", by the Rev. J. P. Conway, O.P., there occurs the following

under the year 1899. "On February 16th the Venerable Fr. Peter Sablon, Preacher General, died. His birth was on October 17th, 1816 at Brussels. He received his education at the Little Seminary at Malines, was clothed in the habit at Ghent in 1838 and became a priest in 1842.



Fr. Peter Sablon

He held Office as Vicar of Tirlemont and was twice Prior of Ghent. His love for missionary work induced him to join the English Province in the February of 1852. In October 1871, he accompanied Father Thomas Burke to the United States, where that eminent orator acted as Visitor for the Father General and returned with him in February 1873. Father Sablon at his death was 83 years of age, professed 60 and 57 years in the priesthood: he was buried at Hawkesyard."

It is interesting to note that eighty-one baptisms are recorded in the Weston register between 1849 and 1855. Father Daniel Henry Haig's name appears in 1855, but between that year and 1866 there is no entry. When Mr. de Bary died in 1858 the mission was closed and the people had to go to Nuneaton.

In 1866, we find the name of Father Henry Formby. He was a secular priest who resided with the Dominican Fathers at Hinckley, and like Father Sablon taught in the boys' school there. At Hinckley, Father Formby wrote all his many works of devotion and history. He evidently helped the Dominican Fathers. also in their pastoral charges. Father Peter Conway O.P. speaks of him as everywhere inspiring respect for his marvellous learning, piety and general open character. Father Formby was born in 1816 at Formby Hall, Lancaster. He took his M.A. degree at Brasenose College, Oxford, and was Vicar of Ruardean, in Gloucestershire. He became a Catholic on January 24th 1846. "Over forty works flowed from his ready pen", continues Father Conway, "while the solid lectures delivered by him in the church at Hinckley can never be forgotten". Father Formby died in Normanton Hall on March 12th 1884, aged 67 years, and was buried at Mill Hill, London.

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. de Bary lived to see Weston's present church. Mrs. de Bary, who had long been in declining health, died at Weston in 1853. She was nursed in her last illness by two Dominican nuns, and in accordance with her expressed wish, she was buried in the cloister of the Dominican Convent at Clifton. Mr. de Bary was buried at Bruges where he died in 1858.

Weston's present church is said to have been built in the year 1869 and to be the first church in England to be dedicated to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

Together with the presbytery, it was largely the gift of Mr. Richard Lerins de Bary, son of Mr. Richard Brome de Bary.

In digging the foundations of the church, a stone holy water stoup was found, an oak pedestal was made to stand in the left hand corner of the doorway into St. Joseph's Chapel and the stoup placed there to be used again by Catholics after the lapse of centuries. At the same time a metal stamped crucifix was discovered. In Father Louis Weldon's time, 1877-9 this was also placed in the church where it remained until about 1890. A simple Gothic building in brick and stone, capable of seating some two hundred people, the church possesses a pleasing Romanesque high altar in stone and alabaster, a font similar in style and construction and some pieces of good sanctuary furniture in oak. The rose window above the high altar (and according to one account the sanctuary itself) were the gift of Mr. Philip Gurdon in 1869 to the memory of his wife. Mr. Gurdon's brother, Fr. Anselm Gurdon, was the first priest appointed to the charge of the new church. A secular priest, and like his brother a convert, Father Gurdon came to Weston from Rome, where he had been a chaplain to the Papal Zouaves of which Mr. de Bary was a member. At this time the presbytery was not yet built, and so Father Gurdon and his brother resided in the village of Bulkington at the home of Mr. H. J. Regan. Father Gurdon stayed there for the few months he was in charge of the mission; his brother remained until his own house (Arden Lodge) was completed. Mr. Philip Gurdon was, with his wife and children, received into the Church at Brompton Oratory in 1866. He had been Vicar of Assington, Suffolk, and appears to have come to Weston from Atherstone, where his wife died

in 1869. His own account of the process of his conversion, written to his daughter (Rev. Mother Amy Gurdon, R.S.H.) is as follows: "Some are brought to the crib by a long and adventurous journey, like the Magi, others by a short and easy road, like the Shepherds; we went with the latter. About the beginning of 1865, I began to have serious doubts as to whether the Church of England was any part of the one true Fold. I stifled these doubts for some months, but they returned and I investigated and prayed. Allies' 'Sea of Peter' finished me . . . As a Parson, of course, the religious question forced itself upon me. One wanted Reality and Certainty and neither was present in the Establishment. This led me to read, study and pray, God's grace helping me and gradually I saw that the claims of the Catholic Church were just and true and then surrendered. Other living men's actions or words on the subject were no help nor hindrance to me. I just stood before God on my own feet and He did it all for me. When I say 'other men' I only mean that I was not induced to go because Newman and Faber went, nor induced to stay because Pusey and many others stayed. Being a Parson, I could not go on doubting or hesitating very long, I had to make up my mind whether I was a sham or not and whether the Established Church was real silver or only plated".



Fr. Anselm Gurdon

Of Father Gurdon's time, it was said that stone throwing at Catholics was then quite common at Bedworth and that rattle was to be found in the holy water at Weston, so rampant was the bigotry of those days against the Church; yet, not a few converts were made, just as in Father Sablon's day. While the church was being built, a little cottage day-school was started. Here, on Sunday afternoons, Father Gurdon gave religious instruction to adults in the upper room of the cottage, while a governess named Miss Coniffe, paid by Mrs. de Bary, instructed the children downstairs. This school continued for some time and was often used for small social gatherings which delighted the people.

The story is told of a very wonderful May procession in Father Gurdon's day. It was a public procession in honour of Our Blessed Lady, from Nuneaton to Weston, the first of its kind in these parts since the change of religion. The statue of Our Lady was carried and hymns were sung. A Protestant girl who followed the procession became a Catholic as a result of it; and on being received into the Church, was driven from home. Her name, I am told, was Fanny Nixon; she eventually became a nun, and as Sister Helen, died at Colwich Abbey.

The Weston cemetery was originally intended to be below, not behind the church. Four deaths occurred before the present graveyard was opened in 1869. Two of these were children of the Hall coachman; they died of fever. Another was a member of a travelling show. The fourth was Emma Cooper who lived at Ryton. These four were buried in ground which has since become the presbytery lawn. Joseph de Bary was buried in the foundations of the St. Joseph's Chapel on the presbytery side of the church. Mrs. Philip Gurdon was the first to be buried in the cemetery proper. She had died at Atherstone just as the church at Weston was about to be built. Father Bowen came from Atherstone for the funeral and was accompanied by Father Arthur (later Canon) Chattaway, as acolyte. Mr. Gurdon left Weston in 1876. Father Gurdon had been an Anglican clergyman and became a Catholic after the death of his wife.

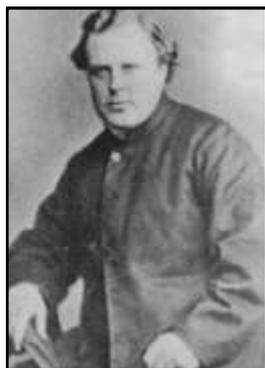
Great grief was felt at Father Gurdon's departure, and for many months petitions were placed in the box on Our Lady's Altar, begging for his return. His successor eventually asked that the petitions should cease, telling the people that such did not seem to be God's will.

Another secular priest, Father William Hilton succeeded Father Gurdon, but served the mission from Nuneaton. This continued for seven years. In addition to saying Mass each Sunday at Weston, Father Hilton gave Benediction every Thursday evening and said Mass in the little church on the Friday. Before leaving he would call at the cottage school and he and the children would walk in procession to the church, where he gave them instruction. When

Richard Lerins de Bary left the Hall, Father Hilton said Mass at Weston only once a month and brought his own server along with him from Nuneaton. Father Hilton left Nuneaton to become a Jesuit.

From 1877 to 1880 Weston's spiritual needs were administered by Father Louis Weldon, O.P. He came to Weston each week-end and stayed at the presbytery, where he was looked after by a devoted servant of the de Bary family named Mrs. Bennett, who at this time was living at the presbytery and attended to the church. Bedworth's first Mass since the Reformation was said by Father Louis in the little chapel built there in 1879.

When Father Louis was appointed to Newcastle in 1880, the Franciscan Fathers took over the charge of the mission and served it from Nuneaton until 1888. At this time Weston Hall was let to a Doctor Poole as a school for boys. Among its pupils, who numbered about sixty, was a future Lord Mayor of Coventry, Alderman Makepeace. Another old boy of the school, Father Verity, used sometimes to revisit Weston; he died at Garstang in Lancashire. Under the name of St. Joseph's College this school continued until 1888. The boys of Weston Hall assisted at the opening of Bedworth's church in Rye Piece in 1883.



Fr. William Hilton

The year 1888 saw the advent of the Premonstratensian Order to Weston, though it was not until a year later, September 8th 1889, that Father Francis, C.R.P., whose name is still a household word in the district, came as Rector of the mission. He had previously been Assistant at Weston to a scholarly old priest named Father Aloysius Darras, C.R.P. Archbishop Ullathorne's invitation to the Premonstratensians to come to Weston is elsewhere described as the Archbishop's last official act in the diocese.

Soon after their arrival Doctor Poole left and Weston Hall became a school for girls; it was conducted by a Miss Phelps and others who were also responsible for teaching Catholic children of the neighbourhood.

The coming of the Premonstratensian Fathers marks in Weston's history a period characterised at once by high hope and corresponding disappointment. From letters written between 1887 and 1892 by Mrs. Pauline de Bary the wife of Mr. Lerins de Bary, it is evident that though the family had left Weston, they retained all their love of the place and deep interest amounting to concern in its spiritual well being. Writing in 1887, Mrs. de Bary speaks of the efforts she and her husband had made "to procure Religious for Weston, I am unable to say yet what will be done" she writes, "but from what has been done by the same Fathers, we may certainly guess that every attempt possible will be made for a school and many other blessings, but the crowning one of all will be the presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament" ... "I hope before long", she continues, "that the Fathers might be able to have a nice priory. They fortunately have many friends abroad and have been exiled from France and many people are interested in them. I have no doubt, in some years, if all ends well, that Weston will be known all over England and Our Lady specially honoured there in her shrine and many many favours granted . . . let us be truly grateful for the prospect at present in view if our offer to the Premonstratensians is finally accepted".

On December 5th 1889, she rejoices at the good tidings received from Weston and expresses a certain concern for the priest's health in serving Bedworth as well as Weston, with the hope that some day he will have the assistance of another priest.

Father Aloysius Darras, C.R.P., had arrived in 1888 accompanied by Father Francis and a lay brother. By Easter of the following year Father Francis had sole charge of Weston. He had come to England (to Storrington) some six years earlier as an exile from the Monastery of St. Michael de Frigolet in Provence. He appears to have returned to France for his ordination in 1886 at the age of twenty-four, only three years before taking charge of Weston. Then when the Franciscans gave up Bedworth in 1889 he was asked by Bishop Ilsley to take charge also of Bedworth, and although it was not until 1892 that Father Francis went to live there it would

seem that he did much for Bedworth while still in residence at Weston.



Fr. Francis Laborde

It was in the little presbytery at Weston that Father Francis first began his great novena work which was to mean so much to Bedworth and beyond. Weston's participation in these novenas seems to have been mainly a spiritual one. This zealous priest did for Weston a great work which has made his memory very dear to Westonians who knew him, but obviously his monumental work was at Bedworth where he found larger scope for his almost unbounded energies. His mightiest work was at Storrington where he died in 1930.

Although the diocesan directory for the year 1892 gives Bedworth as still served from Weston by Father Francis, a letter from Mrs. de Bary dated September 1st 1891, expresses more than disappointment at presumably the transfer of activities from Weston. "The presbytery and church", the letter states, "were given to the Premontres with the understanding that they would live on the place and give the daily Mass for Weston, it was for the good of the people of Weston mission that we gave it." She writes in much the same strain in August, 1892. "Mr. de Bary", she says, "quite thought that the Premontre Fathers would always live on the place and that great good might be done once more there", a letter in which she pays high tribute to Father Gurdon's work in the place more than twenty years before.

It may be gathered from these letters that the church at Weston had still something of the nature of a private chapel for as recently as 1891 the same writer may be quoted as saying "we are at present in correspondence with a religious order but we cannot be at all sure of any of them".

While Father Francis was still in residence at Weston, the chapel attached to Wolvey Hall, some two or three miles away, was opened in 1891, the foundation stone having been laid by Bishop Ilsley on September 15th 1890. The first Mass in the Hall was said there by Father Francis who was at this time tutor to the Squire's sons.

Perhaps it is easier with the passage of time and in the light of later events to see more clearly the will of God expressed in the bidding of ecclesiastical superiors and in their prudent judgment of the circumstances and requirements of the times. Weston and the plans made for it by great benefactors, priests and people, had to be sacrificed to more urgent needs and for thirty-five years more it was to be served from Bedworth. What the Premonstratensians received on taking over the little mission, they gave back with increase of land and property to the diocese for Weston's future.

The extra land purchased by Father Francis still belongs to the mission. The property 'Arden Lodge' bought by Father Francis as part of a great Weston scheme, was sold to the diocese in 1906 and later disposed of by private treaty to Mrs. E. Ruck. It is perhaps unfortunate that this property so near the church and so closely connected with its history should now have passed from the Ruck family into non-Catholic hands.

1928 - 1931

It was early in January of 1928 that I received my appointment and first saw Weston. The country was not at its best, and as I cycled there from Bedworth on a borrowed machine I fervently hoped that I was seeing Weston at its worst. A Father Seward had been in residence and in charge of the parish for only a few weeks when he left for New Zealand. A certain amount of money, quite inadequate for the purpose, had been raised very largely through the efforts of Mrs. Elizabeth Ruck towards renovating and furnishing the presbytery, which for nearly forty years had been tenanted by lay people. This money was supplemented by the diocese in the form of a grant clearly marked as "extraordinary" by the diocesan treasurer and by a loan at the rate of four per cent. The Rural Dean, Canon Godfrey of Nuneaton, was, I

found out afterwards, responsible for the granting of this welcome help. It was the first of his many great kindnesses to Weston during the following two or three years.

While for six weeks the presbytery was being renovated I found shelter with the parish priest of Bedworth, Father, now Canon A. G. Wall, who succeeding Father Clement Krauth, had served Weston from Bedworth for some ten years or so previous to Father Seward's arrival.

Very soon after I took up residence at Weston, Canon Godfrey performed the ceremony of induction. The congregation on that Sunday afternoon, April 6th I think it was, was augmented by a good number of Nuneaton parishioners. About the same time there was a reception for the new priest and a leave-taking of Father Wall; the event was held by the courtesy of Colonel Leyland, of Weston Hall, in a disused coach-house. It was all very striking in its simplicity, and provided Mr. H. J. Regan in his speech of welcome, with an opportunity which he used to the full, of attesting his own wonderful faith, and of singing the praises of Weston's glorious past. The parishioners at this time numbered about seventy, the children attended the Church of England school at Bulkington, they were receiving religious instruction out of school hours and some of the boys were taught to serve Mass. The matter of their schooling was remedied later by a part grant from the Catholic Education Council which enabled the children to be sent by bus to the nearest Catholic school at Bedworth. Here under an exceptionally good headmistress with an excellent teaching staff, the children made rapid progress and received every kindness and attention. The headmistress, Miss Heron, and one of the staff, Miss M. Ruck, were both parishioners of Weston.

At the Whitsuntide of 1928 some of the men of the parish under the leadership of Mr. Regan and at his expense colour-washed the church. The people were for the most part responding well to the presence of a priest in their midst and all that that made possible. The older ones particularly welcomed with obvious joy the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. In addition to the customary services of a parochial church, there began in 1928 the great annual procession of the Blessed Sacrament along the lanes to a neighbouring lawn or an adjacent field. On these occasions some hundreds of people assembled, non-Catholics as well as Catholics; parishioners of Bedworth and Nuneaton, Coventry and Leicester, and friends from as far away as Walsall and Wednesbury. After the first year we used to have a special preacher for the occasion: Father Henry McDonnell, for instance, of St. Patrick's, Walsall, and Dr. T. E. Bird, at that time Vice-Rector of Oscott College. For us at Weston, unaccustomed to numbers, these spiritual "field days" were red letter days indeed and greatly encouraging. Then also there were the other field days, fetes or garden parties which with Christmas prize draws and jumble sales organised by Mrs. Ruck brought in quite a considerable amount of much needed money. Canon Godfrey was a great supporter of these field days and at all times a very real friend.

After twelve months or so the little presbytery was modernised in certain details, water was made available by more up-to-date methods than the hand pump, a bathroom was added and electric light replaced the oil lamps of the church and presbytery.

In course of time a pulpit was installed, one which had done service for many years at St. Mary's, Wednesbury, in the days of Father F. W. Keating, later to become Archbishop of Liverpool.

Renovation of the high altar and its furnishings, along with the baptismal font; the purchase of a carpet for the sanctuary; repairs to the Stations of the Cross, all received gradual attention. The Lenton gift of the holy water stoups at the church entrance made pleasing improvements to the little church which everybody was beginning to take a great pride in. Still earlier and not long before his retirement, Archbishop McIntyre, accompanied by the Dean, paid an informal visit to the presbytery one Sunday afternoon and spoke encouragingly of the work in hand and of the future.

The diamond jubilee of the church brought further improvements, and its celebration on September 8th 1929 with which these notes may fittingly end, will remain, I think, for ever

memorable in the minds of the parishioners. The jubilee gift of the people consisted of an inside porch to the church and a similar partition screen dividing the side chapel from the sanctuary. A benefactor from Nuneaton, Mrs. Jebson, presented a sanctuary chair to be used

CATHOLIC CHURCH,
WESTON-IN-ARDEN.
1869-1929.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8TH, 1929.

**JUBILEE
CELEBRATION**

Of the 60th Anniversary of the Opening of the Church.

8 a.m. Pontifical Low Mass.

11 a.m. Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving
To be celebrated by
The Reverend FATHER FRANCIS,
In the presence of C.R.P.

- THE -
ARCHBISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM
(The Most Reverend Dr. Williams)
W.B.U.

Will Preach the Jubilee Sermon.

6-30 p.m. CONFIRMATION.
followed by
Solemn Pontifical Benediction.

DON'T FORGET
The Jubilee Fete and Field Day,
To be held in the field adjoining the Church, on
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14th, at 2-30 p.m.
Abbey Press, Nuneaton.

Poster advertising the 60th Anniversary of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church in 1929.

for the first time by the Archbishop of the diocese. The Ruck family were the donors of a Benediction humeral veil of rich material and good design. A statue of St. Teresa of Lisieux was presented to the church for this occasion by Mrs. Cordes on behalf of the de Bary family, and when it was solemnly blessed by the parish priest, Father Francis preached. When in 1930, Father Francis died, two extra lamps were placed in the sanctuary in memory of him.

As far as I have been able to ascertain there is no record of the opening of Weston's present church, when exactly it was opened or by whom. Some have thought that the Vicar General of that time, Canon O'Sullivan, performed the ceremony, and the traditional date is September 8th of the year 1869. At any rate Our Lady's birthday was the day chosen in 1920 for the diamond jubilee celebration, and Weston in all its glories of the past had never witnessed anything greater or even comparable, I think. The recently consecrated Archbishop of Birmingham, The Most Reverend T. L. Williams, D.D., M.A., honoured us with his presence, and with him was His Grace's secretary, now Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. Arriving on the Saturday evening they both stayed the night at the presbytery. On the feast itself, the day following, the Archbishop assisted by Dr. Griffin said the earlier public Mass and gave their first Holy Communion to a number of children of the parish. A solemn Mass later was celebrated by Father Francis, and at this Mass the

Archbishop preached. In the evening His Grace, for the first time in his pontificate and as far as I can gather the first time in the mission's history, administered the Sacrament of Confirmation. Pontifical Benediction brought the church celebrations to an end.

OUTSTANDING BENEFACTORS

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Brome de Bary

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Lerins de Bary

Miss Agnes Mostyn (sister of Mrs. R. L. de Bary)

Mr. Philip Gurdon

Mr. Alonzo Harris

A Parish History

Part 2

1929 - 2004





Weston Hall in the early 1930s. The owners during this period were Colonel and Mrs Leyland and family.



An early photograph of the High Altar



An early photograph of the Altar in St Joseph's Chapel. Joseph de Bary of Weston Hall is interred under its foundations.



In this picture of the church interior the two lamps on either side of the sanctuary are not yet installed. This suggests that the picture is probably from the 1920s as the lamps were placed there in memory of Fr. Francis Laborde who died in 1930. Mrs Ruck is seen kneeling at the front.

Altar arranged for the annual Corpus Christi procession in 1937.



*Corpus Christi Procession in 1937.
The procession took place from the Church to the grounds of Arden Lodge in Mill Lane.*



Corpus Christi Procession in 1937.

The following extract is taken from the Nuneaton Chronicle dated 25th June 1937.

“The annual Corpus Christi procession was held at Weston-in-Arden Catholic Church on Sunday evening. Prior to the procession, the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament took place in the church where there was a packed congregation. The Blessed Sacrament was then carried from the church, under a canopy of cloth of gold, by the Very Rev. Matthew Dean Sheridan of Nuneaton, who was the Celebrant throughout, through fields adjoining the Presbytery to the grounds of Arden Lodge, the residence of Mrs. Ruck.

The accompanying procession was of a picturesque and imposing nature, and was witnessed by hundreds of people assembled outside the church, where the setting of trees and verdure enhanced the effect. Dean Sheridan was assisted by the Rev. Father McKenna of Coventry, Rev. Father John Love of Bedworth and Rev. Father W. Connick, Parish Priest of Weston who was Master of Ceremonies throughout.

The Guard of Honour was furnished by Catholic members of the 7th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire regiment. School children taking part in the procession made a pretty spectacle, the boys in sashes and the girls in Confirmation dresses and veils. The May Queen from the Catholic school in Bedworth, Margaret Newman, with her retinue, also participated. There were troops of Boy Scouts, the Oratory Grammar School troop (Birmingham) and the Sacred Heart Catholic troop (Coventry). The Bulkington Silver Band provided the music and the accompaniment to the hymns.

On the lawn of Arden Lodge a handsome Altar had been erected, adorned with flowers, and here a service took place, the hymns ‘God of Mercy’ and ‘Faith of Our Fathers’ being sung. Fr. W. Rooney, Coventry, gave an address on the Festival of Corpus Christi and its associations with ancient English history. The Benediction was pronounced and there was a final service in the church. Many people from Nuneaton, Bedworth, Bulkington and other surrounding places attended to witness the procession.”



Corpus Christi 1977



Corpus Christi 1981



The church in 1988



Spring at Weston in 2004



Christmas is a special time for everyone. The picture above shows the crib positioned beneath the high altar.



This small statue of St. Peter stands on a stone plinth inside the church



A winter wonderland at Weston

Arden Lodge

In 1870, shortly after the church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was built, Richard Lerins de Bary of Weston Hall leased one acre and nine perches of land to Mr. Philip Gurdon for a rent of £3 per year. Philip Gurdon was the younger brother of Fr. Anselm Bertrand Gurdon, the first priest to serve the Catholic community at Weston's new church. A secular priest and a convert to Catholicism, Father Gurdon came to Weston from Rome, where he had been a chaplain to the Papal Zouaves of which Mr. de Bary was a member.



Fr. Anselm B. Gurdon

The father of the Gurdon brothers was the local squire of Assington in Suffolk. Both brothers were born in Belgium. In 1870 Fr. Gurdon left Weston for Alton, Staffordshire. This parish near Alton Castle had been established as a mission in 1840 and the Census of 1871 records Fr Gurdon's occupation as 'Roman Catholic Priest' and his address as 'The Castle, Alton, Staffs'. He lived there with a housekeeper, Mary Bennett and another servant. Fr. Gurdon died in September 1899 at Kingston, Surrey at the age of sixty-nine.

Philip Gurdon obtained a Master of Arts degree from Oxford, became Anglican Vicar of Assington and married Mary Frances Hanbury soon afterwards. In 1866, together with his wife and their three children, he was received into the Catholic Church at Brompton Oratory.

The Gurdon family moved to Warwickshire where Philip's wife Mary died, aged 32, on 30th July 1869 at Atherstone. She was the first to be interred in the cemetery at Weston.

After the death of his wife, Philip Gurdon built a new home in Mill Lane on the land leased from Mr. de Bary and called it Arden Lodge. By 1871, the Census Records show that he lived there with his children John, Arthur and Anny and two servants. In 1876 the family left Weston for France where Philip Gurdon met and married Mademoiselle Marie Rio, daughter of the French writer Alexis-François Rio. A son Francis was born to the couple in France in 1880. The family returned to England and re-appear in the 1901 Census living at 18 Magdalen Road, Hastings.

After Philip Gurdon's departure from Weston, the property then passed to the parish and in 1906 it was sold to the Diocese of Birmingham by Fr. Francis Laborde who served Weston from Bedworth. Later Arden Lodge was sold by private treaty to Mrs. Elizabeth Ruck. The Ruck family feature prominently in parish life at Weston from 1890 onwards.



*Miss Elizabeth Ruck
as a young woman.*

Thomas Ruck was born in the parish of Turk Dean, Gloucestershire in 1851. In 1881 we find him living with his wife Ellen in School Road, Bulkington where he served as a local Police Constable. The couple had three children, Ruth, Roland and Ellen, who were born between 1883 and 1887.

After the death of his first wife, Thomas married again. His second wife Martha Elizabeth Goode was born in Shilton in 1859. Mrs. Elizabeth Ruck soon became a prominent member of the congregation at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart church. During the tenure of Father Hickson she was instrumental in raising funds to refurbish the



The Ruck family c.1915.

(L to R) Peter Ruck, Catherine Maud Ruck, Mrs. Elizabeth Ruck, Roland Ruck, Jim, Lucy Wilson (nee Ruck, seated), Sam Wilson, Norbert, Mary Ruck (seated), Tom Ruck, Teresa Ruck (standing), Elizabeth Ruck.

BITS AND PIECES

You laid your wild flower posy
beside me on the bed,
"They're little bits and pieces
from Weston fields" you said.

There were Bluebells and
Cowslips,
A Ladysmock or two,
Dusky little Chimney Sweeps
And Speedwell's darling blue.

Billy Buttons, pink and white,
Cow Parsley's dainty lace,
A frill of gay young oak leaves,
Golden and full of grace.

Years rolled back, I tried again
The pleasant flowery ways
Through Weston fields and
woodlands,
Loved haunts of happier days.

Many treasured pictures passed
Before my inward sight,
So your little 'bits and pieces'
To me were hearts delight.

Mary C. Ruck

Presbytery. Her four daughters Mary Catherine, Lucy, Ann Elizabeth and Teresa Veronica were born between 1890 and 1900. In 1905 the family rented the Presbytery from Fr. Francis Laborde. The house had not been lived in for some years but soon the place was made habitable. Later the Ruck family purchased Arden Lodge where they lived for many years. The Corpus Christi processions at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in the 1930s began in the church and ended in the grounds of Arden Lodge. By 1946 the Ruck family had moved to 'The Gatehouse' in Mill Lane. Mrs Elizabeth Ruck lived a long and fulfilled life until her death at age 86 in February of that year. Her Requiem Mass was said by Father Isaac Savin and afterwards she was interred in the cemetery at Weston. Her daughter Mary became a teacher at St. Francis School in Bedworth. A poem written by her is shown opposite. She died in 1955. Mary's sisters Elizabeth and Teresa moved from 'The Gatehouse' to Glendon Gardens where they lived until their deaths in 1976 and 1988.

Catherine Maud Palmer was born in Southampton in 1872. In the 1890s she migrated to Warwickshire and married Roland Ruck. When she died in Gulson Hospital in 1937 after a short illness, she left a husband and two sons, Tom and Peter. A woman of simple faith, of constant prayer and devotion to her daily tasks, she is buried in the cemetery at Weston in a coffin



Roland Ruck on his milk round.

of unpolished oak, bearing a crucifix and simply inscribed 'Catherine Maud Ruck'. As an experienced farmer, Roland was a familiar sight delivering milk to the local houses in the area. His second wife Florence died in 1973. A year later, Roland passed away at the age of 90 on 11th February 1974.

The years have changed Weston and Arden Lodge. The property eventually passed from Catholic ownership and later became a home for the elderly. In 2004 it was converted into an apartment block.



This picture of Roland Ruck and his wife Catherine Maud with their son Tom (aged 6) dates from 1910.

Happily the Ruck family continue in Bulkington. Roland's grandson David Ruck and his wife Gillian live at Ryton and regularly attend Our Lady of the Sacred Heart church. Their son Stephen, an optician, and his wife Felicity live in Derby. Second son Ian, a civil engineer lives in Nottingham.

Father Daniel A. Daly

Daniel A. Daly was born on 13th June 1898 in Kanturk, Co. Cork. He was ordained at St. Patrick's College, Carlow on 13th June 1926. Beneath his gruff exterior, Fr. 'Dan' was kind and indeed approachable. He served the parishes of Burslem (1926-1929) and St. Mary's, Coventry (1929-1931) before his appointment to Weston where he remained until 1933. He spent 22 years at St. Michael's, Moor Street, Birmingham until 1955 when he moved to Acocks Green. He eventually retired to his native Ireland and died in February 1964 at Mallow, Co. Cork.

Father Paul M. Clark

Paul Clark was born on 27th January 1859. In 1909 he became a Catholic and then served in the army during the Great War, where he obtained a commission. He was ordained in Rome on 31st May 1931.

He served at the Collegio Beda, Rome during 1931, at St. Chad's, Birmingham from 1931 to 1932 and Cobridge Convent until 1933. He was then appointed to Weston-in-Arden where he remained until his retirement in October 1936. He settled in Exmouth and while acting as supply priest for the parish, he was taken suddenly ill and died at his home in Portland Avenue, Exmouth on Saturday 28th August 1937. He is buried at Woodchester Priory, Stroud.



Father Paul M. Clark (1933-1936)



This photo dates from 1937 and shows Fr. William Connick with members of the First Weston Scout Troop founded by Fr. Connick. Back row (3rd from left to right) Austin Ritchie, Bill Ritchie, Derek Ward, Ivan Ward. Father Connick sits in the front row.

Father William Connick B.D., F.R.Met.S.



Father William Connick (1937-1939)

William Connick was born on 2nd November 1899. He was ordained on 15th March 1924 and was appointed soon afterwards to his first parish at Newcastle, Staffs.

In 1925 he moved to Burton-on-Trent (1925-1926) and from there to Spetchley (1927-1929), Foxcore (1929-1935), Ilmington (1935-1937) and then to Weston-in-Arden until 1939.

His induction took place at Weston in April 1937 when the Dean, Fr. Sheridan, Nuneaton, performed the ceremony in front of a large congregation. In his address, Fr. Connick said that he had moved from "*the pleasant pastures of a Cotswold village*" to Weston "*in order to take a greater part in the fight for Christianity*" which he said "*was fighting against the powers of darkness, in new and seductive disguises.*"

After the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, he was appointed as Senior RC Territorial Army Chaplain of the 48th South Midland Division. In his farewell address to his parishioners at Weston, Fr. Connick declared that "*we are now fighting for the preservation of God's Church and Christian civilisation in Europe.*"

In 1941 he was appointed to the parish of Brailes (1941-1951). From Brailes he moved to his first appointment in Bicester (1951-1954), then Dorchester-on-Thames (1954-1964) and to a second spell at Bicester (1964-1970). He retired in 1970 and died in 1981.

Father Joseph Purcell

Joseph Purcell was born on 11th October 1906 in Kilkenny, Ireland. He studied at St. Kieran's College, Kilkenny and was ordained on 8th June 1930. He served the parishes of Stone, Staffs (1930), St. Catherine's, Birmingham (1930-1931), Aston (1931-1932), Fenton, Stoke-on-Trent (1932-1933) and Old Fallings, Wolverhampton (1933-1939). He followed Fr. Connick as Parish Priest at Weston-in-Arden in 1939 and left for the parish of Pye Hayes in 1940. A second spell at Old Fallings followed which lasted for twenty years (1943-1963).

Keenly interested in boxing and other sports from his youth, Fr. Purcell had been closely associated with St. George's Boxing Club in Belfast frequented by a number of well known boxers of the period.

As a keen cyclist, Fr. Purcell was often seen cycling around the parish. On one occasion in September 1940, while cycling at Temple Hill crossroads in Wolvey, he was involved in an accident with a motor cycle driven by a resident of Barwell. He was taken to hospital and treated for abrasions and a cut forehead. Undeterred by his experience he was not detained in hospital and continued with his duties.

Fr. Purcell moved to Dumfries in 1963 and died there in 1974.

Father Gerald J. Adams

Gerald J. Adams was born at Handsworth on Christmas Day 1901. He came from a large family of eight children and after his education at Cotton College, North Staffs., he entered the priesthood and was ordained at the age of 27 on 16th March 1929.

He was renowned for his generous and hospitable nature. After his ordination he served at St. Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, St. Patrick's, Birmingham (1929-1937), Woodstock & Kidlington (1937-1939) and Pype Hayes (1939-1940). He was appointed to Weston-in-Arden in 1940 and left for the parish of Weoley Castle the following year. There he remained until 1947 when he was moved to Bilston.

During his last years he suffered from angina and died on 17th October 1966. He is buried at Oscott.

Isaac William Savin was born at Banbury on 2nd April 1899. He was ordained on 2nd June 1928 and soon afterwards was appointed to his first parish, St. Peter's, Leamington Spa (1928-1932).

He served the parishes of Dudley (1932-1936) and Chipping Norton (1936-1941) before his appointment to Weston-in-Arden where he remained for 25 years (1941-1966).

He celebrated his golden jubilee in 1978. The passage below, written by Fr. Ross, is taken from the Parish Newsletter dated 21st May 1978.

"Fr. Savin will reach his Golden Jubilee (50 years a priest) on June 2nd. In recognition of this memorable achievement and especially conscious of the fact that he spent half of that time, namely 25 years, here at Weston-in-Arden, I have suggested that we send Father Savin a Spiritual Bouquet. On Tuesday I made a surprise visit to him at Nottingham where he lives in retirement with his dear sisters Mary and Ellen at 54 Rollaston Drive, Derby Road, Nottingham, NG7 1JW. He looked quite well and he made me very welcome, as did his sisters. I spent much of the day with him and took him back in time as he recalled the names of many of you who knew him so well. I told him of the affection so many of you feel for him and of our desire to mark his Golden Jubilee with a Spiritual Bouquet. This, he said, would please him more than any material gift would. I am delighted to tell you that his Golden Jubilee is to be celebrated in the Nottingham Cathedral on June 10th at 12 noon where our own Archbishop, George Patrick Dwyer will preside over a concelebrated Mass with Father Savin's contemporaries and relatives and friends."



Father Isaac W. Savin (1941-1966) with his mother

He retired to live with his sisters in Nottingham in 1966 and after their deaths, went into the retirement home at Aston Hall where he died, after a fall, in 1987 at the age of 88.



Father Terence T. Smith on the Presbytery lawn at Weston.

Father Terence Thomas Smith was appointed to the parish of Weston-in-Arden in 1966. Born at Sparkhill on 17th September 1919, he left school aged 14 to work with his father as a painter and decorator. Like many of his contemporaries, he served in the army during World War II from 1939 to 1945. This training in the forces would help later when, as Parish Priest at Weston, he ministered to the young recruits at the Chapel of St. Barbara, Bramcote Barracks.

He entered Oscott in 1947 and after six years study, was ordained at St. Chad's, Birmingham on 7th June 1953. In 1961 he was diagnosed as a diabetic, something that was to remain with him for the rest of his life.

His first appointment was to the parish of Lichfield (1953-1961), then Perry Common (1961-1962) and Uttoxeter (1962-1966) before his arrival in Weston (1966-1972). Fr. Smith saw the great changes that came to the Church as a result of the Second Vatican Council.

In the Parish Newsletter dated 17th September 1967, he outlines some of these changes. *"The Archbishop wants our views on Friday Abstinence. 1. Abolish it, but keep Friday as a voluntary day of self denial and extra prayers. 2. Abstinence to remain obligatory but only in the home. 3. No change (the present position is*

that we are gravely bound to observe the days as a whole. Individual days are a matter for one's own private judgment in the light of circumstances). Liturgy: 1. Good or ill effects of the changes 2. Has English helped us to participate in the Liturgy? 3. Do you welcome the simplification of the rites, and the changes in the lay-cut of the churches and altars? Do you regret the loss of some ways of worship? In translations do you prefer 'You' or 'Thou'? These matters will be discussed at the Parish meeting on Wednesday 24th Sept at 8 p.m. in the Hall."

After leaving Weston, Fr. Smith was Parish Priest at Bicester (1972-1987) and at Our Lady and St. Wulstan, Southam from 1986 until his death on 17th August 1990.



Fr. Smith with First Holy Communion children

Charles Christopher Ross was born in Coventry on 16th March 1920. Before the outbreak of World War II, he joined the Royal Artillery at its headquarters at Woolwich Arsenal. During the War he served as a gunnery sergeant in the Western Desert and Italian campaigns and ended his military service in Greece.

After leaving the army he worked as a chauffeur for the directors of Courtaulds in Coventry. Then he and his brother Bill became car delivery drivers. He was a skilled motor mechanic and a keen footballer.



The chalice and paten presented to Fr. Ross at his ordination in 1958. Fr. Ross left these to the Parish of Weston in his will.

He was inspired to the priesthood on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham and shortly afterwards began his studies. He was ordained in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, Dublin on 1st March 1958.



Father Charles C. Ross (1972-1984)

His first parish appointment was to St. Catherine's, Birmingham (1958-1961), then he served the parishes of Lichfield (1961-1964), Stechford (1964-1966) and Watlington (1966-1972). Fr. Ross took up residence as Parish Priest of Weston in 1972. Very soon he and his sister Florence became much respected by all sections of the community in Bulkington.

He celebrated the 25th anniversary of his priesthood in 1983. Following an illness which he bore with great dignity, Fr. Ross died on 27th January 1984. After Pontifical Requiem Mass at Our Lady of the Angels, Nuneaton on 3rd February celebrated by Archbishop



The new altar donated by Mrs. Frances Higgins in memory of her husband George. It was installed in 1981 and blessed by Bishop McCartie in April 1982. The picture above shows Fr. Ross saying the first Mass on the new altar on 12th December 1981.

Maurice Couve de Murville, Bishop Leo McCartie and Bishop Joseph Cleary and attended by priests from all over the Archdiocese, officers from Bramcote Barracks carried his coffin to its final resting place in the cemetery at Weston.

Father Ross is best remembered as the composer of our Parish Hymn 'Will you stay, Lord, in Weston with me?'

The Junior Leaders Regiment, Royal Artillery Bramcote Barracks

For many years Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Weston-in-Arden has had close links with Bramcote Barracks. The chapel there, dedicated to St. Barbara, was well attended each Sunday for morning Mass. This chapel was closed in 1996 and Mass is now celebrated in the shared Anglican church at the camp on the first Tuesday of every month.

Many of the boy soldiers and officers of the Junior Leaders Regiment are remembered with great affection by many people, not only here at Weston, but in Bulkington as a whole.

The article below was written by Major D.A. Welsh for the 1990 Flower Festival.



There has been a tradition of Boy Service in the Royal Artillery since its earliest days when enlistment was direct into service regiments as trumpeters. The Gunners were the first regiment in the Army to establish a systematic boys' training organisation. Up to 1925, boys enlisted at various R.A. Depots throughout the country where they formed part of the Depot Brigades. In 1926 all boys were grouped together in the Boys Depot at Woolwich. The aim of the Boys Depot was to produce horsemen and trumpeters who would later become the Warrant Officers and Senior Non-Commissioned Officers of the Regiment. Boys were taught riding, marching, sounding, gymnastics, semaphore and general education.

In 1937 with the advent of mechanisation riding was no longer taught. Recruiting was stopped at the outbreak of war in 1939 and the Batteries left Woolwich before ceasing to exist in January 1942 when the last boys were posted to service regiments.

However, in October 1942 a Boys Battery, recruiting "the future Warrant Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers of the Regiment", was reconstituted. To give greater responsibility in training, ranks up to Boy Battery Sergeant Major were authorised in 1944.

The syllabus by now included education, drill, physical education and special to arm training. In 1948 the Battery moved to Rhyl and on again to Hereford in May 1952 where another Battery was added. In 1957 the title was changed to the Junior Leaders Regiment Royal Artillery, increasing the emphasis on leadership training, "adventure training" and similar subjects.

By 1958 a third Battery was added in time for the move to Bramcote in April 1959. With the formation of the fourth Battery in 1967 the strength of the Regiment rose to over 600. The present establishment is for 800 and is responsible for posting Junior Leaders to some 23 Artillery Regiments.

*Major D. A. Welsh RA.
1990*

Father Peter John Moore

Peter Moore arrived at Weston-in-Arden after the death of Fr. Ross in 1984. Although his stay in the parish was short, he is remembered with great affection by many parishioners.

He was born on 17th May 1917 and ordained on 20th December 1952. He served in Rome (1952-1953), Saints Mary & John, Wolverhampton (1953-1956), Bromsgrove (1956-1957), Christ the King, Coventry (1957-1959), St. Patrick's, Birmingham (1959-1963), Henley-on-Thames (1963-1965), Dorchester-on-Thames (1965-1968), Avon Dassett (1968-1970), Norton-le-Moors, Stoke-on-Trent (1970-1983) and in Santa Rosa, California, USA (1983-1984).

He retired to Llandudno in 1984 but did not settle in his retirement. After his brief spell at Weston, he joined the National Catholic Television Centre at Hatch End, Middlesex where he remained until his death in 1989.

Father John Richard Watkins

John Watkins was born in Sparkhill, Birmingham on 11th May 1922. During his priesthood, Fr. John served the Archdiocese for nearly 50 years. Educated at Cotton College under Canon Bernard Manion and at Oscott under Mgr. Len Emery, he was ordained on 27th July 1947.



Soon afterwards he was appointed to the parish of Bloxwich (1947-1951), then served at Warley (1951-1956) and Sutton Coldfield (1956-1961). He was appointed Parish Priest at Old Hill (1961-1962), then Halesowen (1962-1966), Kidlington (1966-1969), Kenilworth Convent (1969-1970), Bedworth (1970-1971), Brierley Hill (1971-1975), Upton-on-Severn (1975-1980) and Weston-in-Arden (1984-1985).

He loved animals and was a very talented organist. In 1985 he retired to live at Aston Hall where he provided cover for priests on holiday or who were absent through illness. In 2000 he undertook the chaplaincy of a convent nursing home in Cardiff where he remained until his sudden death on 9th February 2002.



The interior of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church photographed in 1988



Fr. Terry Luxon with 'man's best friend' in front of the High Altar

Terry Anthony Luxon was born on 24th June 1941 in London's East End. His path to the priesthood was not an easy one but the youth from West Ham overcame all the obstacles. He applied to 13 dioceses before he was accepted as a student by the Archdiocese of Birmingham. He took elocution lessons to overcome his Cockney accent and was ordained on 11th March 1967.

His first appointment was to the parish of Cheadle (1967-1968), then Longton (1968-1972), Warwick (1972-1975), Smethwick (1975-1979), Nuneaton (1979-1981) and Cannock (1981-1986) before his arrival in Weston in 1986.

Soon after his ordination he showed signs of kidney failure which he bore without complaint until his death in 1998. Four times each day he would undergo CAP Dialysis at the Presbytery and still manage to continue all of his parish work. His pleasant and cheerful manner became well known around the area. His sermons have become legendary at Weston as well as his occasional quick temper.

Fr. Terry celebrated the 25th anniversary of his ordination at Weston on Friday 13th March 1992. With many priests of the Archdiocese and the entire congregation, Bishop Brain celebrated Holy Mass and described him as *'the right man in the right place at the right time to do God's work'*. A keen supporter of West Ham United Football Club, Fr. Terry never forgot his roots in the East End of London. In 1990 he was instrumental in the first Flower Festival at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. The success of this festival has made it a regular bi-annual event at Weston where it continues with an increasing standard of excellence.

On 7th March 1998 Fr. Terry departed this life and following Requiem Mass at Our Lady of the Angels, Nuneaton, he was interred in the cemetery at Weston. In his final letter to his parishioners from hospital, Fr Terry describes his feelings of how *'fortunate to be in the Parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart'* and he hopes that *'the parish remains united in love'*. The letter is signed *'your cheeky, but you may say loveable Parish Priest, Father Terry'*.



Fr. Luxon's 25th Anniversary. (L to R) Bishop Brain, Canon Roughan, Fr Luxon, Canon Hanlon

Father Stephen Philip Day M.A.

Stephen Day served Weston from Nuneaton in 1998 following the death of Fr. Terry Luxon. Though his stay was short, Fr. Stephen provided a valuable ministry to the parishioners of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart at a time when many were suffering the bereavement of a much respected priest. Fr. Stephen was born on 10th June 1961 and ordained on 14th February 1998. His first appointment was to the parish of Our Lady of the Angels, Nuneaton (1998-2001). Currently he is Priest in Charge at St. Anne's, Nuneaton.

The Guild of St. Stephen

Since our Parish was founded in 1869, we have been blessed with dedicated altar servers. After a period of training the servers are enrolled into the Guild of St. Stephen. St. Stephen was chosen as the patron of altar servers because he was a dedicated servant in the early Church and gave his life for his belief in Christ. The members of the Guild of St. Stephen serve each Sunday at Mass. Currently there are 14 servers, both boys and girls, aged between 9 and 14 years.



Altar Servers – Past and Present

(Top left) Archbishop Vincent Nichols blesses the restored Rosary Window in 2001 flanked by our dedicated servers.

(Top right) Terence Howkins with the late Fr. Terry Luxon. Terence has been a long serving Sacristan and altar server at Weston.

(Above) Paul Jones, our present Sacristan, pictured recently with a group of our altar servers.

(Above right) Servers Len Liggins & Joseph Ritchie photographed in 1939.

(Right) A group of Weston altar servers from the 1980s.



The Parish Choir



The Choir at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart has been an important part of parish liturgy for many decades. Under the direction of Janet Cooper, the Choir now has 13 vocalists, 3 of whom are men. Organists Marlene Lawlor and Suzanne Fitzsimons together with other talented musicians form the musical accompaniment.

The Choir practices every Monday evening preparing liturgies for up to ten weeks in advance and rehearsing new hymns, psalms and acclamations.

The Father Terry Luxon Memorial Library

Since its foundation in 1992, Mrs. Yvonne Robinson has managed our Library and its valuable resources for all of the parishioners of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish. Dedicated to Father Terry Luxon who originally inspired the idea, the Library has developed and expanded under Yvonne's care and is now housed in its own building situated within the church grounds. Originally the Library used the old Hall in the cemetery behind the church and work began to clear and clean a space covering two-thirds of the floor area on Monday 31st August 1992.

By March 1993 the Library was well established in the old hall with a good supply of books generously donated by parishioners. In the winter of 1993, the library had to be closed to accommodate builders working on the Church structure. They needed somewhere to store their materials, to eat their lunches and shelter from the bad weather. The following January the library was re-opened after a good 'spit and polish'. In 1994 the library project was given a hut to itself. Metal shelving for almost the length of one wall was provided and erected. Parishioner assistance also provided a new roof for the library and a coat of weatherproof paint.

In 1999 the Library was presented with a collection of 2000 books owned by the late



Richard Thornton-Pett. Book lover, collector, Dominican layman, magistrate, and music enthusiast - his family did not want his library split up or sold.

Books are on free loan and cover many subjects other than Religion. The Library now has 26 sections ranging from Theology to Cookery. A thriving second-hand book section provides money to cover the cost of running the Library building and the purchase of new books.

The Library is available to anyone, including children, who can take care of a book and bring it back so that others can enjoy it also. The Library is open on Saturdays from 11 am to 12 noon, after 10 am Mass on Sundays and by request to Yvonne Robinson.

The Union of Catholic Mothers

Founded in 1913 by the Catholic Women's League, the Union of Catholic Mothers had Lady Catherine Berkeley as its first national President. The aims of the organisation are:-

- to insist on the sacramental character and permanence of marriage and the observance of God's laws in the married state.
- the Catholic education of the children.
- the practical management of the home.
- active participation in 'good works'.
- a deep spiritual culture for the Mother and her Child.



On Wednesday, 27th May 1964, in the home of Mrs. Sterling at 59 Cleveland Road, Bulkington, seventeen of Weston's ladies met with the intention of forming a branch of the Union of Catholic Mothers in the parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. This meeting, sanctioned by Fr Isaac Savin and chaired by Mrs. Winifrid Crawley, founded what has become during the last 40 years, a tradition of active support for the sanctity



and welfare of the Catholic home. By the time of the second U.C.M. meeting held on 10th June, members had increased to 21 and the venue had moved to a room at the Rule and Compass in Leicester Street as the hut used for parish events at that time was unsuitable for meetings. At this gathering, Mrs. Davies was elected as local President along with Mrs. Wyatt as Treasurer and Mrs. Friswell as Secretary. Mrs. Sterling and Mrs. Wildey were elected as Committee members.

A milestone was reached in 1989 when the U.C.M. celebrated their 25th anniversary at a special meeting in Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish Hall.

Founder member Mrs. Winifred Crawley, President Janet Cooper and Secretary Rose Young along with Fr. Terry Luxon and fellow members of the U.C.M. cut the cake in the photo on the left.



Fr. Michael Gamble with members of the U.C.M. celebrating their 40th Anniversary on Wednesday 5th May 2004.

Parish Events - Past & Present

On 8th September 1969, the parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart celebrated its centenary. The Archbishop of Birmingham, the Most Rev George Patrick Dwyer, highlighted the **Centenary Celebrations** at Weston. In the evening a reception for the Archbishop, priests and parishioners took place in Our Lady of the Angels Parish Hall, Nuneaton.



The **Christmas Bazaar** is an annual event that attracts many parishioners and members of the public.



*Christmas Bazaar. (Left) L to R - Eileen Martin, Angela Dwyer, Pat Birch.
(Right) Mae and Con Reidy at their stall in the Parish Hall.*

The Over 50's Club was founded in 1996 and now has 44 members. Regular meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month in the Parish Hall from 2.00 to 4.00 pm. Activities consist of games, quizzes, slide shows, coach trips etc.

Mill Hill / APF Missions have benefited during the last 16 years by contributions in excess of £19,000. Peter Robinson, the Parish Organiser, and 12 promoters collect approximately £1,900 per annum.

Parish Dances are held in the Parish Hall on a number of occasions during the year. Favourites are the New Year's Eve and St. Patrick's Day dances.

Bingo takes place on the first Friday of each month in the Parish Hall.

Men's Card Night is a Friday event for the 'boys' - held monthly in the Parish Hall.

Traidcraft stall opens for business on the last Sunday of the month in the Parish Hall after Sunday Mass.

100 Club costs £2 per month. 1st Prize £60, 2nd Prize £25, 3rd Prize £15.



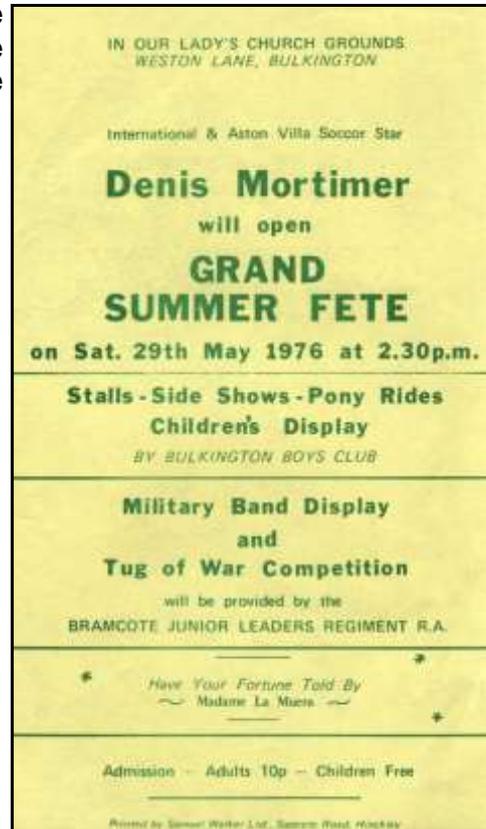
UCM Fashion Show. (L to R - Jacqui Ball, Pat Birch, Delmah Dickens, Eileen Clarke, Mary Baker, Julia Cooper, Joanne Cooper, Janet Cooper, Chris Cartwright of Chris's Fashions, Attleborough).

The **Summer Fete**, normally held in June of each year, is a fun day out for all the family. Many parishioners and members of the public attend what is regarded as a 'not-to-be-missed' event.

The first recorded Summer Fete in the recent history of the parish took place in July 1930 during the tenure of Fr. Hickson. Canon Godfrey of Nuneaton performed the opening ceremony. Bulkington Silver Band played selections in the afternoon and for dancing in the evening.

Like all good Summer Fetes everywhere, the stallholders played a key part in the success of the event. The list of stalls and the names of the stallholders makes interesting reading.

Pound Stall	Mrs S.H. Wilson
Confectionery	The Misses A. and J. Wilson and T. and L. Loveitt
China	Mrs Ward
Rummage	Mrs Ruck and Miss M. Ruck
Ice-Cream	Mrs Ison
Tea Tent	Mrs A. Allcoat, Mrs Lomasney, Mrs Liggins and Mrs Loveitt
Gold fishing	Mr McDonagh (Nuneaton)
Darts	Mr N. Wilson
Cup Breaking	Mr J. Neale
Coconuts	Mr T. Loveitt
Swings	Messrs Liggins and F. Goode
Balloon Bursting	Mr G. Liggins
Hidden Treasure	Mr S. Wyatt (Bedworth) and Mr Loveitt
Bowls	Messrs Hill and Moss
Fish Pond	Mr W. Varney
Air-Gun Shoot	Mr T. G. White
Hoop-La	Mr Mallabone
Roll the Penny	Mr T. Wyatt



A flyer from the 1976 Summer Fete.

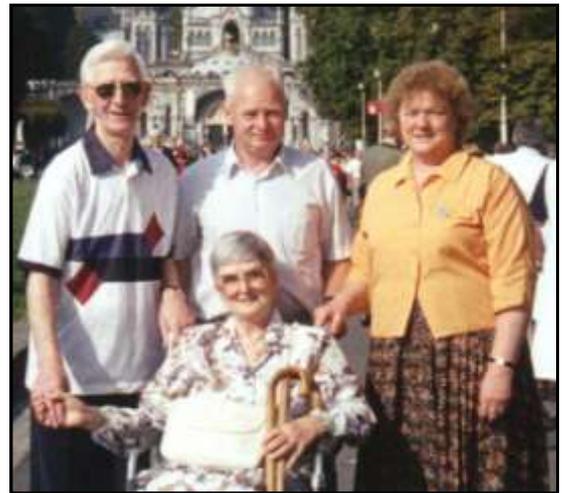


A Rummage Sale in 1925.



Summer Fete 2004.

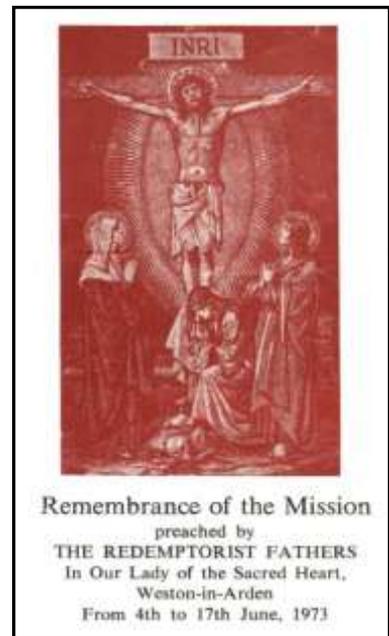
It is gratifying to note that perhaps, nothing really changes. The Summer Fete held in June 2004, some 74 years later, is still going from strength to strength, many parishioners work harder than ever to make it a success and it is well attended by all sections of the community in Bulkington, Bedworth and Nuneaton.



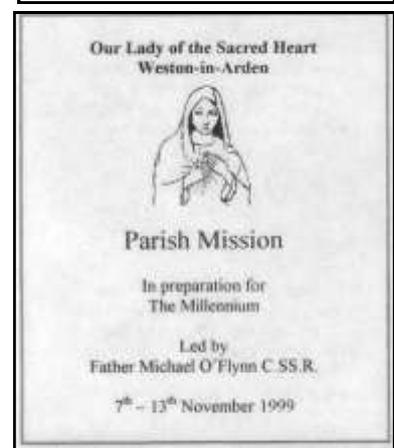
Pilgrimages to Lourdes have always been popular parish events. (Above right) Noel Coleman, Lester Friswell, Norma Friswell and Florence Coleman (seated) at Lourdes in 1990. Noel and Florence were prominent Weston parishioners until they moved to Windermere in 1991. (Above left) Fr. Gamble at Lourdes in 2001 with a group of parishioners from Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.



VE Day 50th Anniversary celebrations in the Parish Hall in 1995.



A group of Weston ladies enjoying some Christmas spirit. In the front row sitting is (the late) Mrs. Honora Paris (second from left), (the late) Mrs. Olive Wildey, and Mrs. Dinah Howkins (far right). These ladies have been prominent Weston parishioners for very many years.



Parish Missions have been a regular event at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. 1973 and 1999 were significant years.

The Presbytery, Grotto, Cemetery & Grounds



(Left) An early picture of the Presbytery. (Right) A more recent view (2004).

1869 March 5	Joseph de Bary aged 3 buried by:	19 March
1869 June 23	Emma Cooper from Ryton aged 26 by Fr. Gurdon	26 June
1869 July 30	Mary Frances Gurdon from Athrington aged 33	3 August
1869 Aug 5	Margaret Holland from Buckington aged 13	7 August
1869 Dec ^{Dec} 7	Helena Mary Regan from Weston aged 1	6 December
1869 Dec 4	Anastasia Regan from Weston aged 2	5 December
1871 July 17	Mary Sharman (née Cooper) from Ryton aged 24	21 July
1871 July 20	Hannah Hirstkins (née Parker) of Belworth	28 July
1871 July 20	Hannah Mary Hirstkins " " 2 months	28 July

The first page of the Parish Register of Deaths dating from March 1869. The first entry is that of Joseph de Bary of Weston Hall, aged 3 years, who was interred under the outer wall of St. Joseph's Chapel on 19th March 1869. The second on the list, Emma Cooper from Ryton, is buried in front of the Presbytery. The third entry is that of Mary Frances Gurdon, sister-in-law of Weston's first Parish Priest, Fr. Anselm Gurdon. She died at Athrington during the building of the church and was the first to be interred in the cemetery. During the mid-19th century, infant mortality was high. This is starkly reflected in the Parish Register above.



Our Parish Hall, built in 1971, is a valuable asset not only to the parishioners of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart but also to the village of Bulkington as a whole. The picture on the left shows the Hall as it looked before renovation. The picture on the right shows the Parish Hall in 1998 after renovation.



During 1990, the idea of a Grotto dedicated to Our Lady was put before the Parish Priest, Fr. Terry Luxon. After receiving his approval, parishioners set about the task of planning and building the Grotto which was completed in June of that year. The result was a peaceful and tranquil place for parishioners and visitors to kneel and pray within the church grounds. Soon a Rosary Group was formed which has met and prayed each Monday evening at 7.00 pm for the past 14 years.



The picture on the left shows the original cemetery behind the Rosary Window. The first to be buried here in 1869 was Mary Frances Gurdon, the sister-in-law of the first Parish Priest at Weston, Fr. Anselm Gurdon. She died, aged 32, at Atherstone as the church was being built. The picture above shows her grave, the surround of which bears her name.



The picture above is a view from Mill Lane of the land behind the Presbytery during the preparations for the new cemetery. The picture on the right shows the new cemetery in 2003. Two of our Parish Priests are buried here, Fr. Charles Ross and Fr. Terry Luxon.



In 2001, our parish won the 'Best Kept Cemetery and Grounds' award sponsored by Nuneaton and Bedworth Council. The photograph on the left shows the presentation of the certificate and cup to Fr. Michael Gamble by the Lord Mayor.

The Children of Our Parish

No attempt to document the history of our Parish would be complete without one of the most important ingredients - our children. They represent the continuity of our community and are the future generation of parishioners. The following selection of memories make interesting reading.

Witches and Goblins

(By Master David Coleman - age 10 years)

As I peeped through my window one night,

I saw a witch in a lamp light;

Her face was all wrinkled and knobbled

And instead of walking she hobbled.

She called all her goblins and knaves

Up from underground caves

To do mischief in village and town

And also on hillside and down.

When daylight hath come her power overwhelmed,

She summons her goblins all back to her realm,

And should you awake on a cold winter night,

You also may share such a very strange sight.

Note: This poem appeared in the first issue of a Parish Magazine in 1973. David is now living in Manchester and is a director of a computer company.



May procession at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in 1940.



First Holy Communion at Weston in the 1960s.



Fun at the Flower Festival in 1990

The **Children's Liturgy** group began in 1998 and now averages an attendance of 15 children each Sunday who are divided into two groups, pre and post First Communion. The children and their leaders leave Mass after the opening greeting with a blessing and an invitation to return for the Eucharist. The structure follows that of the main liturgy with appropriate hymns, mimes, stories and plays. Of the team of 10 leaders, two are musicians.

The group return to Church as part of the Offertory procession often with a banner or poster for display to the whole congregation.

Our Lady is crowned 'Queen of the May' by Katie O'Connor during the May Procession in 1998.



Sacramental Life in the parish has continued throughout the 135 years of its existence. **Baptisms** have numbered 55 during the last three years as well as 30 First Communions and 36 Confirmations. Baptismal preparation, formerly provided by the Priest, is now conducted in accordance with the new Baptism Preparation Programme written and devised by the Archdiocese. The Sisters of the Congregation of Mary, Mother of the Church (CMMC) at Street Ashton, near Rugby assist in the delivery of the programme.



Fr. Gamble with a recent Baptismal group.



First Holy Communion is an important event for every Catholic child and fond memories of this special day remain forever with everyone who has experienced it.

The picture on the left shows First Holy Communion at Weston on Sunday 20th June 2004.

Photographed with Fr. Gamble are Cara Airey, Amelia Alexander, Neesha Darlaston, Connor Diver, Lauren Glynn, Kayleigh Harvey, Kimberley Inott, Rebecca Furey and Matthew Furey.

Confirmation is celebrated at Weston every year through the good offices of one of our Bishops or the Episcopal Vicar. The candidates are carefully prepared with the assistance of our schools and the team within the parish.

The picture on the right shows Confirmation at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in 1989.



The **Catholic schools** of St. Francis of Assisi, Bedworth and St. Thomas More, Nuneaton provide the children of our parish with an excellent Catholic education.

The picture on the left shows pupils from St. Francis School photographed in 1989.

Our **Parish Youth Group** meets on the fourth Friday of the month in the Parish Hall. Under the guidance of Andrea Friswell and her team, the group provides a valuable meeting point for students in school years 6 to 10.

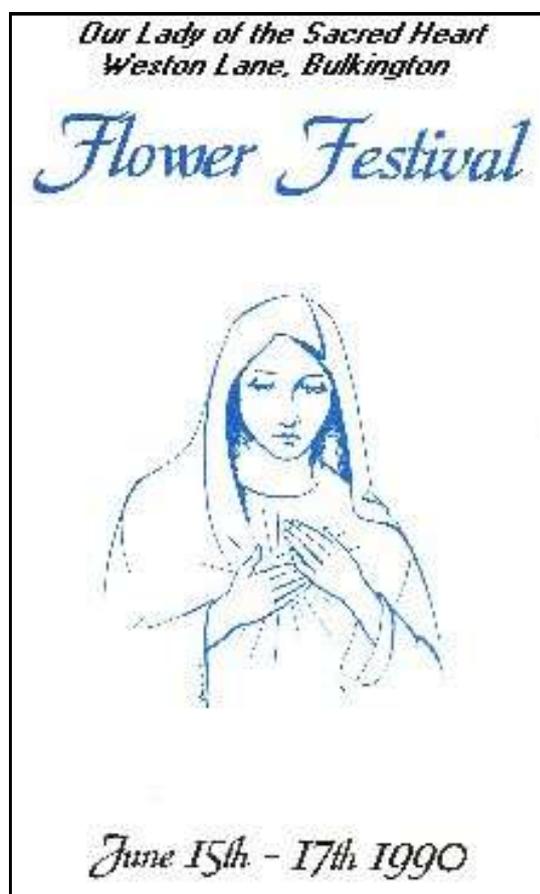
Festival of Flowers

In the Parish Bulletin dated 2nd July 1989, the following item appeared.

"FLOWER FESTIVAL - 15th, 16th and 17th June 1990. It is hoped to organise a Flower Festival in our Church next June. The theme will be 'THE LIFE OF CHRIST'. Please see the notice board in Church for further details on the various aspects of the theme."

As a result of this appeal by Fr. Terry Luxon, a meeting of parishioners was arranged in the Parish Hall for Wednesday, 20th September 1989 at 7.30 pm. A Flower Festival Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Con Reidy and very soon work began on the first Flower Festival at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. It was decided to have the theme of the Festival expressed in 18 flower tableaux arranged inside the Church. With the help of parishioners and other Bulkington Churches and organisations, a huge amount of work was undertaken including fund-raising, advertising, press coverage, catering, as well as the many other tasks necessary to ensure that this unique event went smoothly.

The result was far beyond expectations. The sun shone throughout the 3-day event on 15th, 16th and 17th June 1990 and Weston's first Festival of Flowers received a very large number of visitors from far and wide. The standard of skill of those responsible for the design and arrangement of the flower tableaux received much praise from everyone and set the standard for future Festivals. A grand total of £6799 was raised for Parish funds. Since 1990, Flower Festivals have taken place in 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999 and 2001. The standard of excellence has increased each time and the event is now highly regarded locally.



(Left) Souvenir Programme and (Right) 'The Annunciation' from the 1990 Flower Festival.

<p>THE ANNUNCIATION Listen - you are to conceive and bear a son and you will call him Jesus. Sponsored and arranged by The Union of Catholic Mothers.</p>	<p>THE CALMING OF THE STORM And he rebuked the wind and said to the sea "Quiet now. Be Calm". Sponsored and arranged by The Choir of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.</p>	<p>THE INSTITUTION OF THE EUCHARIST Now as they were eating Jesus took some bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to his disciples "Take it and eat" He said. Arranged by The Nuneaton Flower Guild. Sponsored by J. Delo, F. Dumbleton, J. Cartwright & F. Preston.</p>
<p>THE BIRTH OF JESUS The Angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. Sponsored and arranged by Bulkington Scouts.</p>	<p>THE MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES There is a small boy here with five barley loaves and two fish but what is that between so many. Arranged by Ryton Methodist Church. Sponsored by Weston Lane Stores.</p>	<p>THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN Then an angel appeared to him, coming from heaven to give him strength. In his anguish he prayed even more earnestly and his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood. Arranged by Bulkington Adult Education.</p>
<p>THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT Get up take the child and his mother with you and escape into Egypt. Arranged by Bulkington Adult Education. Sponsored by Coventry Blockages.</p>	<p>THE EXPULSION FROM THE TEMPLE Then he went into the temple and began driving out those who were selling. Arranged by Jeanette Woodward. Sponsored by Devall Funeral Directors</p>	<p>THE CRUCIFIXION When they reached the place called the skull, they crucified him there and the two criminals also, one on his right and the other on his left. Sponsored by the Chesterton family. Arranged by T. Howkins.</p>
<p>JESUS IS BAPTISED And suddenly the heavens opened and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. Sponsored and arranged by D. and T. Howkins.</p>	<p>THE TRANSFIGURATION There in their presence he was transfigured. His clothes became dazzlingly white. Sponsored by G. and K. Alexander. Arranged by K. Alexander.</p>	<p>THE BURIAL At the place where he had been crucified there was a garden and in this garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been buried. Sponsored and arranged by C. Smith & M. Garrett.</p>
<p>JESUS CALLS THE FIRST FOUR DISCIPLES Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. Sponsored by W. Friswell and Sons Ltd. Arranged by Bulkington Brownies, Guides, Guiders & Rangers.</p>	<p>PETER'S PROFESSION OF FAITH You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church. Sponsored and arranged by The Youth of the Parish.</p>	<p>THE RESURRECTION As they stood there not knowing what to think two men in brilliant clothes appeared at their side. Sponsored and arranged by Bulkington Ladies Club.</p>
<p>THE WEDDING AT CANA Fill the jars with water and they filled them to the brim. 'Draw some out now' He told them. Sponsored and arranged by M. and C. Reidy.</p>	<p>THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM Great crowds of people spread their cloaks on the road while others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in His path. Sponsored and arranged by Susan Peters Hair Salon.</p>	<p>THE ASCENSION Now as he blessed them, he withdrew from them and was carried up to heaven. Arranged by the churches of St. James, Bulkington and St. Andrew, Shilton.</p>

The 18 Flower Tableaux from the 1990 Flower Festival



Open-air Mass on the Presbytery lawn during the 1990 Flower festival.

Memories of our Flower Festivals



A splendid display ... from Barney Lawlor



Maggie Smith, Noel Coleman and Eileen Martin at the Bottle Stall



St. John Ambulance in attendance



Don McLean opens the 1990 Festival



A feast fit for a king ... tents were provided by Bramcote Barracks



'The Birth of Jesus' from the 1990 Festival.



Wilf and Dot Robinson with their stunning display of pictures



Music from The Salvation Army band.

Memories of our Flower Festivals



(Top left) Open-air Mass at the 1997 Flower Festival.

(Top right) Bob Broly, the popular Local Radio Presenter, opens the 1999 Flower Festival.

(Above left) Archbishop Vincent Nichols enjoys a 'cuppa' at the 2001 Festival.

(Left) A tableau from the 1999 Festival.

(Below left) A tableau from the 1999 Festival.

(Below) Fun and games at the 1997 Festival.



Something Old, Something New ...

On previous pages we have mentioned the children and young people of our parish. These are the future parishioners who, in years to come, will carry the banner of Catholicism in Weston-in-Arden.

Our older parishioners will remember days of joy and sorrow during their own lives. Many have migrated to Weston from other regions of the British Isles and other parts of the world. They share many things in common, especially a love for this beautiful part of Central England. We must not forget the efforts of our senior citizens who have given so much to make our parish what it is today.



The picture above left shows Mrs Ann Ganley, Weston's oldest parishioner. The picture above right is Mrs Ganley with Patrick Joseph, her late husband.



The wedding of Marlene Mary Grove and Bernard Lawlor took place at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Weston on Saturday 17th July 1954. The ceremony was performed by Fr. Isaac Savin.

Barney, Marlene and family are still parishioners at Weston. They recently celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary. Barney is noted for his 'green fingers' and Marlene is a talented organist who provides accompaniment to the Choir.

**Catholic Church
of
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart**



weston·in·arden

spring 1973

price 8p

The picture above shows the front cover of the first edition of Weston's Parish Magazine published by Fr Charles Ross in 1973. The drawing of our parish church was by the late Wilfred Robinson. His artistic flair is also displayed in the interior drawings. It was in this first edition that Fr Ross published our Parish Hymn "Will you stay Lord, in Weston with me?" for the first time. Articles from the magazine are reproduced below.

Wedding Bells

On Easter Tuesday, Peter James Wyatt and Elizabeth Mary Brogan will be married in the Parish Church [Weston]. We wish them happiness and long life together. Peter is well known to many for his family have served the parish long and faithfully... Elizabeth, though technically not a parishioner, is to be seen in our church every Sunday. Shyness and reticence form part of her charm and Peter has, as they say, "got a good 'un." I am sure that I speak for all when I say, "Thank you, Peter, for your parochial efforts and we extend to you and Elizabeth heartiest felicitations on your Wedding Day."

[The Wyatt family now live in Donegal, Ireland]

Poets Pantry

"and the life everlasting" by H.L. Broadhurst.

How can you tell a child life does not end
When its dear mother lies cold and lifeless;
Where is the man, the father, who can pretend
To that child, they've not lost their happiness;
"Pray to Almighty God; Seek comfort there"
The Church is right; of course the priest is right;
But, think again; How can he turn to prayer
With tear stained eyes that once were clear and bright?
Those memories will fade and time will heal
The sadness and the heavy sense of fear;
The child will smile again and soon will feel
The warmth of new love with each passing year;
But will the father's tears be all in vain,
Or will he turn to Mother Church again?

Parish Visitation 2004

“The key characteristics of the life of the Church are summed up in the two words that we are using more and more frequently: “communion” and “mission”. This reminds us that the Church is, of its nature, always reaching out with the message of Christ, for that message is intended for everyone....Among the duties given to the bishop is his oversight of the life of the diocese as a whole. In order to exercise that oversight, we have begun in this diocese the pattern of Parish Visitations. It is a structured approach and it involves various steps and various people. It brings parishes together in their Deanery, and makes present the wide life of the ‘communion’ of the Church in the diocese as a whole. But its fundamental aims are

..... The choir attends other churches in the diocese to join in new Masses and celebrations and is always ready to assist with weddings or other church ceremonies.

Readers:- Involvement of the laity in reading at Mass has been a regular feature of the liturgy in the parish for over 30 years and is organised to cover all weekend Masses, holy days, the Easter period and Christmas by the organiser who publishes 6-monthly lists. Mass during the week, funerals if the family are unable to do it and any special occasions are also covered, the readers performing whatever duties the priest may require.

There are currently 36 readers in the parish with an age spread from 14 to 74 years most of whom have been on the list for many years, taking their duties very seriously and a large proportion of them have attended a course for readers.

Reconciliation opportunities are provided every Saturday in conjunction with exposition and these are supplemented prior to Easter and Christmas with Penitential services at which other priests of the deanery give willingly of their time. Confession is also available on call.

A section from our Parish Profile

really quite simple: to encourage and strengthen Catholic life wherever it is to be found; and to deepen our reflection, understanding and participation in the communion and mission of the church.”

These words, spoken by Archbishop Vincent Nichols to the Parishes of the South Oxford Deanery at Thame on Tuesday 1st April 2003, sum up the aims of a Parish Visitation. The first step is for each parish to carry out a review and to draw up a profile of its life. Indeed, a Parish Visitation helps the Parish Priest and parishioners focus on strengths and weaknesses within the parish community. The Parish Profile in booklet form, based on the

themes Communion and Mission in the Church, is compiled by the priest and parishioners in advance of the Visitation. A similar Deanery Profile, focussing on wider Deanery issues, is also written before Visitations begin.

On Wednesday 13th October 2004 at 7.00 pm, Parish Visitations for the Rugby Deanery began with Evening Prayer at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Weston-in-Arden. His Grace the Archbishop Vincent Nichols, Bishop Pargeter, the Episcopal Vicar Canon Tom Farrell, all of the priests of the Deanery and parishioners from all of the Deanery parishes attended. Following Evening Prayer, proceedings moved to the Parish Hall where a representative from each parish gave a three minute summary of their Parish Profile. Afterwards the Dean gave a presentation of the Deanery Profile.

On Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th December 2004 the Parish Visitation took place at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Canon Tom Farrell spent the weekend at Weston and opened our Parish Bazaar on Saturday 4th December. He presided at both weekend Masses and on Sunday 5th December, after 10.00 am Mass, an Open Meeting took place in the Parish Hall. Parishioners were invited to discuss parish matters with the Episcopal Vicar and Fr. Michael Gamble. The Rugby Deanery Visitations ended with a closing Mass at the Sacred Heart Church, Bilton, Rugby on 7th December 2004.

Statistics for the Parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Weston-in-Arden

Parish Population	900	Confirmations (2001-04)	36
Mass Attendance	250	Marriages (2001-04)	18
Baptisms (2001-04)	55	Reception of Converts (2001-04)	11
First Communions (2001-04)	30	Deaths	31



*A recent view of the rear of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church.
The restored Rosary Window is clearly visible and the oldest part of the cemetery is in the foreground.
Mill Lane runs along the left of the picture.*



BULKINGTON ANTHEM

A BASKET OF FLOWERS

I've been out gathering flowers
Out in the bright sunshine
Passing away happy hours
With an old sweetheart of mine
Take them from me as a token
I lay them down at your feet
Don't let our friendship be broken
Accept all these flowers so sweet

There are roses and lilies, violets blue
Snowdrops and pansies
Bright primroses too
Sweet williams and fuschia
Sweetheart for you
In my neat little basket of flowers

Though the road be one ray of sunshine
As onward through life we must go
Praying that nothing should part us
Nor death separate us two.
Though the road be one ray of sunshine
As the flowers we pluck so sweet
Don't let our friendship be broken
I lay them down at your feet.



