

THE STORY OF CATHOLIC WAPPING

Compiled for the centenary of
St Patrick's Parish by

VINCENT WORLEY



FOREWORD

"Gigantes erant in diebus istis" ("They were giants in those days") quoted Canon Joseph Reardon at the beginning of his notes on parish history. Vincent Worley has very wisely concentrated on 'those days' and left any more detailed account of present day Wapping to a future historian. We are very grateful to Vincent for all the work he has put into writing this facinating book. It is a fine souvenir to have for the centenary of the founding of St Patrick's Parish, Wapping.

J.D. O'Neill

~ 1971 ~

FATHER HICKEY'S ARRIVAL

A hundred years have now past since Fr. David Hickey, priest of the new mission of St. Patrick, celebrated the first Holy Mass for his parishioners. Amongst his congregation on that Sunday morning in October, 1871, there were certainly many who were raggedly dressed and in a wretched state, from a lifetime of privation, but who could doubt the keen sense of elation they must have all felt at having once again a priest in their midst; a man of God, whom they would regard as their natural leader, whom they would support with what little means they had, and who would share with them the frightening hardship of their daily lives.

RED LION STREET SCHOOL

Nobody thought to set down for our future curiosity, the scene at that momentous Mass, nor even to stop to count the bowed heads of the great throng standing in the stifling schoolroom at No. 15-20 Red Lion Street. The less fortunate were doubtless pressed close against the windows, or standing silently along the narrow street, leading Northwards towards Greenbank and past the peeled, decaying, front of No. 11, which was to be Fr. David's home for the next six years.

OUR NEW PARISH

Since the demolition of the Old Virginia Street Chapel, some nine years previously, to make way for Pennington Street Dock development, Wapping Catholics suffered a loss of identity. They had also become a slightly wayward element in the vast new parish of St. Mary & St. Michael, centred around Commercial Road. And perhaps with reason, for they remained particularly proud of the long history of Catholic activity in their neighbourhood, which seemed to have lost focus and direction, without a priest and chapel of their own.

CARDINAL MANNING HELPS

Cardinal Manning, who had a close knowledge of the riverside through his family business, sensed the insularity of Wapping, and agreed to the appeal for a separate parish just the moment the slight prospect of a church building site offered itself. In appointing a youthful and seemingly inexperienced priest to resurrect the parish, the renowned Cardinal gave proof of his unerring judgement of character.

EARLY TRIALS

Fr. David had the friendly charm and sense of gaiety which made light of the grim surroundings and the apparently hopeless task of collecting sufficient money for a church building. He had a bustling energy and robust health which brought him through exposure to typhoid and smallpox, while on his interminable visits to comfort the sick, and console bereaved parents.

PRIEST AND SCHOOLMASTER

As chairman of the managers of Wapping and District Charity School, we have glimpses of him thumping out a piano tune for the little ones, while on his daily rounds of the school, teaching maths, and 'capes and bays' geography to the older boys. Almost every morning he would wait in one of the classes for the register to be called; then dart off with a list of truants to round up. Tradition has it also, that he was not averse to bawling out a few ruffianly fathers, in defence of their neglected wives and children. A daunting duty this, even for a tough Catholic priest, in the seething, ill-lit, courts of 19th Century Wapping.

ANCIENT SPLENDOURS

Fr. Hickey was first in a hundred year old new line of Wapping priests, who sustained with the Holy Faith, and cheerful optimism, this riverside community, and who brought into each stage of even the most humble life the Sacraments, framed in the splendour of the Roman rite. And since centenaries are occasions on which to reminisce, as well as to give thanks to God, it would be as well to remember that he was by no means the first Catholic priest to serve the neighbourhood. For more than six hundred, out of the past eight hundred years, Holy Mass and all the Offices of the Church have been celebrated daily in Wapping. For almost an equally long period of time, there has been provision for a Catholic education.

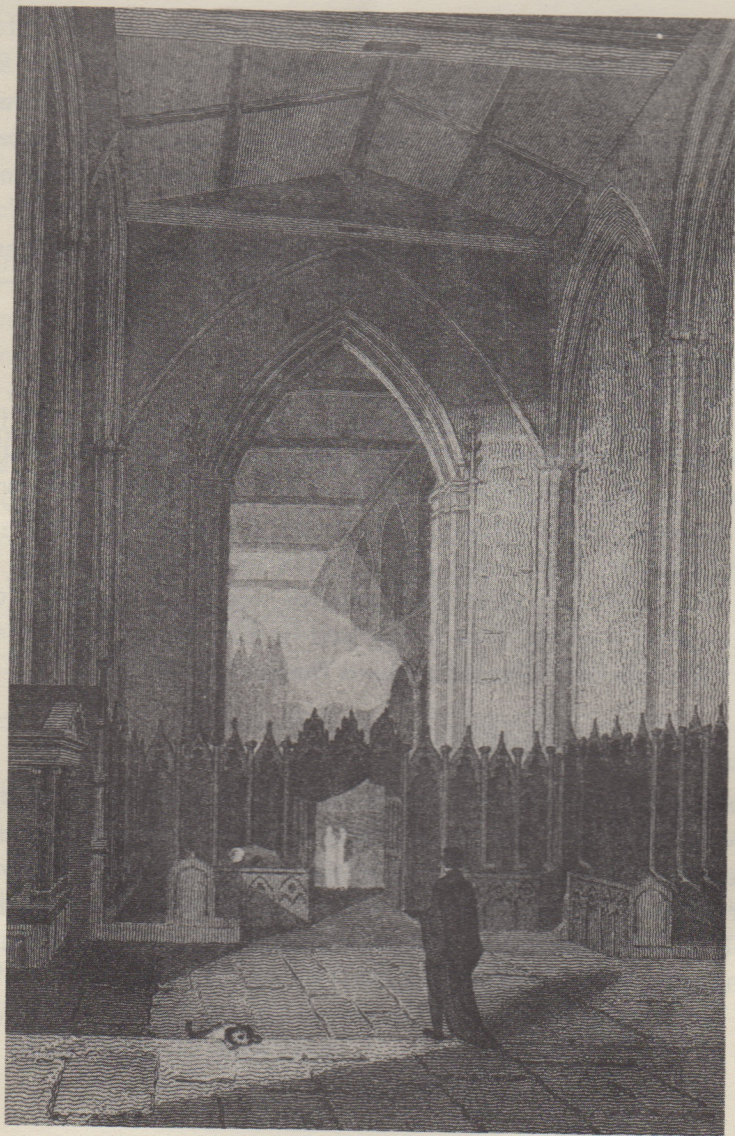
In the year 1148 Matilda of Boulogne, wife of King Stephen moved into the Tower. Stephen had driven out the other Matilda, wife of the Holy Roman Emperor. To the east of this fortress home lay the expanse of scrubland and tidal marsh called Wapping. Deciding that it was in need of the development, Matilda gave it to the Augustinian Canons of the 'Old Gate'. She made provision also for a Chantry chapel to be erected on the land, where, after her death, daily Mass would be said in perpetuity for the repose of her immortal soul, as well as for her two children Maud and Baldwin.

DAILY MASS AND HOSPITAL CARE

Normally Chantry chapels were endowed with sufficient funds to ensure the necessities of life for the celebrant: often a poor priest from the villain class of medieval society. St. Katharine's, being a Royal Chantry, had an establishment of not less than thirteen canons, nuns and other clerics. Besides the daily Requiem, they were strictly charged to take care of the aged and infirm; to maintain a primitive hospital ward; to educate youngsters of the locality; to offer refuge, free meals and hospitality to all travellers and foreigners coming up the river who found themselves in need.

DEVELOPMENT AND SQUABBLES

As the Chantry and surrounding buildings grew in size and splendour and the charitable work extended with the aid of royal donations, the senior canon sought independence for his community from the mother priory of Holy Trinity, Aldgate. The Prior of Aldgate countered this move with a direct appeal to Pope Innocent III. This Pope held England temporarily as a Papal fief having deposed and excommunicated King John.



Interior of St Katharine's Church
(Engraved by C. Pye from a drawing by J.P. Neale)

POPE'S DECISION

He decided in favour of Holy Trinity. Later, in 1261, Bishop Faulk Basset of London had to intervene in a further dispute over the right to appoint the senior canon of St. Katharine's. Bishop Faulk was a close friend of the aged Pope Alessandro IV, and one of the Pope's last acts was to agree to the Bishop's suggestion that the right of appointment be vested with each successive queen of England. This decision served to strengthen the tie of attachment between St. Katharine's and the Royal Family.

ST. KATHARINE'S HOSPITAL'S INCOME

A new source of income came to the hospital through overseas trade. They had an extensive waterfront and were exempt from the duties imposed by the City guilds and corporation. Some inkling of trade with Lombardy comes from the life size gilt head of Christ which was lost overboard in the deep mud of Wapping foreshore in the early 14th Century. This fine work is now one of the prized exhibits of the Guildhall Museum. Many Lombard churches also possess a few ancient vestments, which they claim to be authentic 'Opus Anglicanum' the name given to the sumptuous metal thread and silk embroidery, produced in London throughout the Middle Ages.

RECONSTRUCTION

Two priests, Paul of Monte Florum and John of Hermesthorpe, set about the extensive reconstruction of the hospital during the prosperous reign of the warrior king Edward III. The old Norman chapel was rebuilt in the gothic style with such skilled craftsmanship, that it was in sound condition when torn down in the early part of last century. It is reasonable to assume that the building funds came out of the enormous plunder sent back from his conquests in France by Edward. Pilippa was the patron of St. Katharine's at that time. She was the queen who managed to combine a pious and saintly nature with the occasional cavalry charge against the Scots, at the head of her army.

FRENCH ARTISTS' CARVINGS

Artists and craftsmen of all kinds followed the loot to London in search of safety from the French Wars and commissions. Amongst these came a group from the Norman town of Rouen, who carved the wonderful choir stalls, still to be seen in the modern chapel, erected at the time of the Festival of Britain, in Butcher Row, off Ratcliff Highway. Each bench end and 'miserichord' tip-up seat in the choir stalls is carved into a little sermon in wood taken from a popular book of the middle ages called a 'Bestiary.' The 'Bestiary' was in effect a catalogue of all the strange beasts thought or known, to exist. Each was illustrated its bad habits described, and accompanied by a short sermon on the follies of similar human conduct.

ROYAL CHARTER

Thomas Becketon, canon of St. Katharine's during the 'Wars of the Roses' secured a Royal Charter from Henry VI. The King was a gentle charitable disposition and he took an active part in the work of the foundation. His end came with a knife in the back, while at his prayers, just a few hundred yards away from St. Katharine's. Henry's charter extended the boundary of the hospital further Eastwards into Wapping, approximately to the site of present day Pier Head.

WAPPING FARMERS

There were a few farmsteads in Wapping at that time and the tenants would have worshipped at the Chantry Chapel. Nothing at all is recorded of the 'Hermit' nor of his 'Hermitage.' All inhabitants of the St. Katharine's boundary were secured by the Charter of the rights, protection and immunity from interference granted by several Popes; as well as freedom from taxation and the legal decisions of Royal Justices. The Charter was never revoked specifically by later Parliaments; a tempting thought.

Documents of this kind, however, were little more than painted sheepskin when Henry VIII found that he had frittered away in luxurious living the 'wall of brass' built up for him by his miser father. But of course being 'Supreme Head of the Church' he quickly realized that he also had a God given right to plunge his hand into the poor box. St. Katharine's appeared on the long list of monastic buildings to be pillaged and sold, literally as hard core, to the highest bidder from the disreputable section of the English gentry. For opposing his rapacious will, the Carthusian Saints of Tower Hill were hacked to bits and their chapel used to store the royal gardening tools and compost.

ST. KATHARINE'S SURVIVES

Unique, amongst more than two thousand monastic centres in England, St. Katharine's survived the orgy of destruction. By a chance whim, so typical of Henry's psychopathic nature, he left the hospital in the care of Queen Katharine, as a kind of wedding gift in reverse. It became the only interest left to that poor woman and on her death, the Canon officiated at her funeral. Henry then permitted her name to be added to the list of queens for whom the daily Requiem was offered; yet in life he disowned her.

SEYMOUR LOOTS ST. KATHARINE'S

The much-married monarch left the patronage to his widow Katharine Parr. Though already in her dotage, she married the unscrupulous young Admiral Seymour. He was a bitter anti-Catholic and wasted no time in getting the appointment of first lay Master of St. Katharine's. At his arrival, the unbroken daily oraison of four hundred years ceased and he stopped long enough to knock out the 'idolatrous' windows; make over every shilling to his personal account and dispatch the sacred altar vessels to the kitchen of his town mansion.

SECULARISATION

Mary Tudor's personal chaplain, Bishop Malet, was the last to celebrate Holy Mass in Wapping in 1558, when he ceased to have charge of St. Katharine's. From then on, it remained in lay hands; functioning as a collection of alms houses and rented property, in which successive waves of immigrants found a refuge and legal loop hole through the restrictions on foreigners, enforced by the City of London justices.

RECLAIMING GREEN BANK

After establishing residence, the seafaring element amongst the migrants of the 17th and 18th centuries, settled along the foreshore, as far as Limehouse. Their dwellings were built on the 'Greenbank' thrown up as a tidal defence by Queen Elizabeth's commissioners. They were encouraged to build on the reasonable assumption that they would maintain the bank, if only to protect their homes from flooding. In time, as the river meander favoured the North side, more of the muddy foreshore was re-claimed, to create the legendary Wapping Street, with its ancient, slippery, stairways to adventure and pirate infested inns lurching over the high tide.

IRISH ARRIVALS AT WAPPING

Some of the first immigrants from Ireland disembarked on Wapping shore, in the mid 18th century. They sought work along the expanding quaysides and in the lighters, which ferried ashore exotic cargo, from the deeper drought vessels anchored mid-stream. This time consuming and wasteful process of unloading, which could only be done at high tide, led to a demand from the City Fathers for the construction of deep water dock, as near as possible to the City centre.

Apart from the Chapel itself, the collection of monastic buildings on the extensive St. Katharine's site had crumbled, through neglect, into an irreparable state. A private group of financiers arranged for Parliament to pass an act, in 1825, authorising the construction of St. Katharine's Dock. With practically no warning more than two thousand people, some old and penniless, were evicted onto the pavements.

GOLDEN HANDSHAKE AND EVICTION

Sir Herbert Taylor, Master of the Foundation, received a handsome recompense from the financiers and a two acre plot in the middle of Regent's Park. There he built himself a far from modest villa and stable block for carriages and horses. Even in those times of outrageous privilege, his conduct did not escape criticism. Less concern though was shown for the elderly victims of the bailiffs than for the Duke of Exeter's tomb in the Chantry Chapel. A new chapel was erected, to preserve the tomb and the choir stalls, not far from the Master's mansion; and a school house built for the education of thirty six genteel pupils, mostly sons and daughters of Royal Pensioners.

WAPPING RUINS BUILDS BELGRAVIA

Ironically, the sledge hammers of Irish Catholic labourers, recruited by the great engineer Thomas Telford, broke the walls erected so carefully by their spiritual ancestors. The rubble of the Chapel, together with endless thousands of tons of Wapping clay were carted along Oxford Street and dumped in Belgravia marsh, to secure the foundations of that elegant neighbourhood.

VIRGINIA STREET CHAPEL

The origin of the Chapel of St. Mary & St. Michael, Virginia Street, is now lost beyond all hope of trace. One popularly held theory is that it began as a hospital home for Catholic sailors, and was built, at the beginning of the 18th Century, at the expense of the Portuguese Ambassador. This same tradition relates that the room in which Mass was offered had a prominent carved coat of arms above the door, to indicate that it was under the protection of King John V, and that the priest was immune from arrest. There is also a doubtful romance to the effect that a Portuguese Jew, named Emmanuel, passed himself off as a priest at the Chapel, in the time of Bishop Challoner, by presenting false papers. The imposter was said later to have died in Whitechapel Poorhouse.

BISHOP CHALLONER ARRIVES

Dr. Challoner took charge of the London Diocese in 1758 and very soon after appointed Fr. James Webb to the Wapping Chapel. At that time the penal laws against Catholics were in full force and, like persecuted minorities everywhere, they were held to be the root cause of every possible social evil.

FR. WEBB ESCAPES ARREST

Two reports relating the East London in a popular newspaper, 'The Gentleman's Magazine', give a clear picture of the risks which Fr. Webb ran in taking charge of the Wapping parish. The first describes how on Sunday 23rd February, 1735, at about 11 o'clock, the armed 'Peace Officers' while on their rounds to ensure that there was no smoking, disorder or tippling during the time of Divine Service, broke into the garrett of a pub in Rosemary Lane, and arrested a hundred worshippers at a Catholic Mass. The priest, protected evidently by the crowd, managed to escape through a trapdoor and over the roof to the next building. There were some gentlemen in the congregation, but most were from the poor class, although, surprisingly, they were found to have Mass books with them.

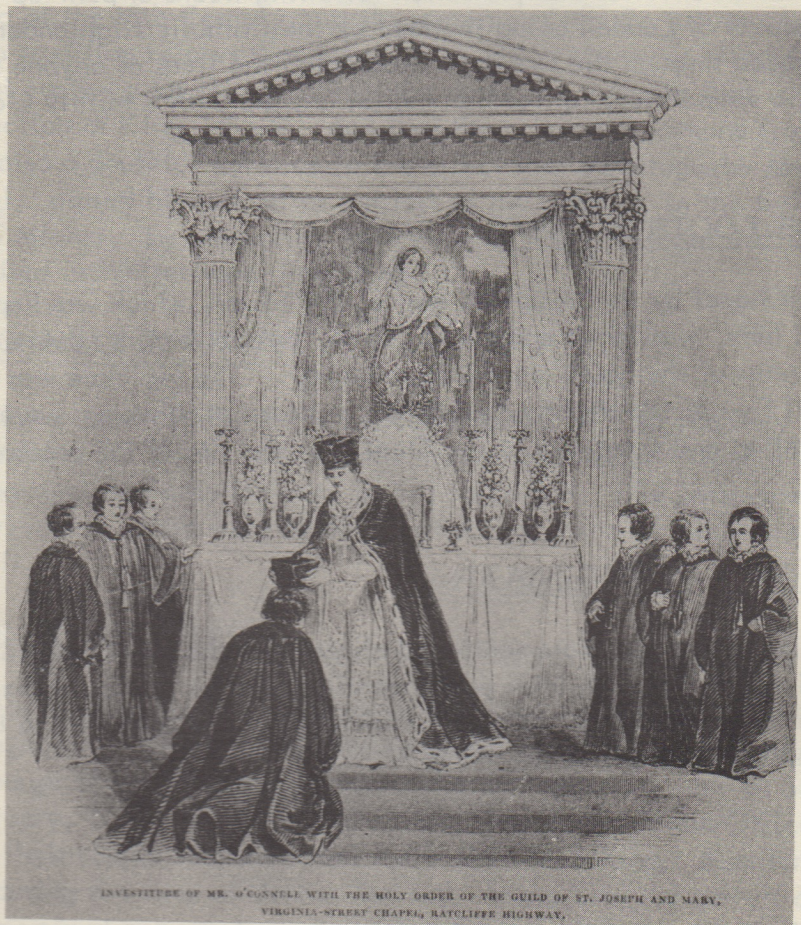
The second report describes the rioting of the London mob, on receiving the news of the defeat of Bonny Prince Charlie's army at Culloden in 1745. In an explosion of relief and jubilation following weeks of pent-up terror at the prospect of London being invaded by the Catholic Highlanders, the mob rampaged through the streets, threatening the lives of anyone suspected of Catholic sympathies, or for that matter anyone with a faintly Gaelic accent.

RC CHAPEL LOOTED & BURNT

A private Chapel by the waterside east of the Tower, which was kept by an un-named lady, was found and burned down, but not before silverware and other contents of the house were stripped away. The violence was not sated until five of the Highland prisoners, chosen at random, were hanged, disembowelled and quartered at the Oval, on the site of the present cricket ground.

3,000 AT MASS AT VIRGINIA ST.

It is not likely that the aforementioned chapel was the one in which Fr. Webb was appointed in '58. A later priest mentions that he had a congregation of more than three thousand, mainly of Irish origin, and employed as ballast getters and coal heavers at the wharves.



Investiture of Daniel O'Connell
in the Virginia Street Chapel

Virginia Street Chapel was in fact very discreetly situated on the right-hand side under an archway entrance, next to No. 61 Virginia Street. In front of the chapel was King's Head Alley, then, a perfect warren of courts with names such as Vinegar Yard and Toft's Place. Virginia Street connected Ratcliffe Highway to Wapping (High) Street, and Pennington Street, Admiral Byng Street and Artichoke Lane ran eastwards from it. Only Pennington Street remains today to record the exact spot; for the apse and altar were about ten yards behind the dock wall, at the western end of that street.

FR. WEBB & MR. TYTE'S SYSTEM

Under Fr. Webb's courageous guidance the Virginia Street Catholics flourished quietly for a number of years. At each Holy Mass, the big silent Mr. Tyte, the door-keeper, kept a watch on the familiar faces as he collected the constantly-changed tickets for admission. Then, a few moments before the priest vested himself at the altar, the doors were locked and a watchman knocked to signify that there was no one loitering in the alleyway outside.

PAYNE INFORMS - MASS STOPS

Into this devout, law-abiding, yet illegal community a carpenter named Payne quietly inserted himself. His Christian name is nowhere recorded but it might as well have been Judas. Payne had taken the trouble first to make a tour of the Embassy Chapels to familiarize himself with Mass and Benediction. Early in 1767 he denounced Fr. Webb to the Law Officers who, without warning, arrived in his company and after a formal identification carted off the poor priest to Newgate prison. 'The Universal Meseum', a magazine of that time, reports that four Mass Houses were shut down between 6th February and 27th March, 1767. Payne, in all probability was responsible for this.

FR. MOLONEY GAOLED & £100 FOR PAYNE

At Croyden Assizes Payne appeared to denounce Fr. J.B. Moloney, a priest from somewhere in South London. Fr. Moloney was sentenced to perpetual confinement in the gaol of that town. Payne received the reward which was the sole reason for his treachery. Under an Act of Dutch King William III, passed soon after his arrival in England, there was a reward of £100 payable by the County Authority to any common informer who secured the conviction of a popish priest.

FR. WEBB IN NEWGATE

Fr. Webb languished in the dank stench of Newgate for 17 months before being brought to trial. Since gaolers earned their living by bribes in those days, one expects that the people of Wapping visited him and kept him supplied with food. Those without friends rarely survived so long in the notorious gaol.

FR. WEBB'S TRIAL

On Saturday morning, June 25th 1768, Fr. Webb was brought before the Right Hon. William Earl Mansfield, Lord Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench, in Westminster Hall. Payne gave his evidence and clearly his demeanour disturbed the respectable Protestant jurors. Fr. Webb was counselled to remain silent and the bench of Judges did not demand that he be obliged to admit that he was a priest. This unusual turn of events was but a prelude to the thundering condemnation of the bewildered Payne delivered by Lord Mansfield in his summing-up:

JUDGE'S DRAMATIC DEFENCE

"Gentlemen of the Jury, you will be pleased to observe that there is but one evidence to prove that Mr. Webb is Popish Priest and has said Mass. Payne is the only man who has sworn it, and this Payne is an illiterate man, knows nothing of the Latin language, and moreover is giving evidence in his own cause. Because it Payne convicts him, he is entitled to a hundred pounds reward.

MR. TYTE KEEPS TIGHT

"You have heard other witnesses. One, Mr. Tyte, a doorkeeper who remained true to his name and kept tight. Yet another said he saw Mr. Webb sprinkle with holy water. One said he heard him preach a Popish sermon and being asked what it was about, said that he taught that good works were necessary for salvation and the witness looked upon that not to be the doctrine of the Protestant Religion! Gentlemen, I will leave that to your consideration. In short, none of these evidences are anything to the case in question.

PERHAPS HE'S A DEACON

"As for preaching, laymen often perform that. At least, a Deacon may perform that in the Church of Rome. A Deacon may even administer the Sacraments and perform a great many other services; and we do not know but that he may elevate the host". (At this point Lord Mansfield pulled himself up, realising perhaps that he was revealing a much too familiar knowledge of the Roman Rite. He continued:)

"At least, I do not know but that he may; and I am persuaded that you know nothing about it. Now, if a Deacon may perform such things as Payne saw the defendant do, they are no proofs that he is a Priest. Therefore I propose to give it up to the jury in this light.

ORDINATION MAKES A PRIEST

"You will be pleased to observe that the charge before you is quite different from that which lately happened in Surrey; there the defendant confessed himself to be a priest".

Sir Fletcher Norton: "My Lord, we had it in his own handwriting, which said, I am a Priest of such an Order'."

Sir Mansfield: "I did not know that. I thought he had only acknowledged it. There are no proofs of his ordination, which must be before he can be proved to be a Priest.

INFORMER'S EASY MONEY

"This Payne, having got a hundred pounds since the conviction of that man in Surrey and now being in the hopes of more money, swears positively that the defendant said Mass, and you see what 'pains' he has taken, running here and there, sometimes to the Ambassadors to see how they perform there and then stealing in privately where he thought he might lay an information to get another £100. Though according to the Penal Laws of Queen Elizabeth, which are still in force, it is High Treason for a Priest to come into England, the informer has no entitlement to a reward. Payne has not gone by that statute, but the one made in King William's reign, 11 & 12 C.4, soon after the Revolution. This statute obliges the County to pay him within a month, if he can convict the defender.

BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

"Since that case in Surrey I have consulted together with my fellow judges and hold that these laws were made 'in terrorem' (at a time of fear). This we hold to be no longer, neither was it ever designed of the legislator to have these laws enforced by every common informer.

"Take notice, if you bring in a verdict of guilty. The punishment is severe, a dreadful punishment indeed! nothing less than perpetual imprisonment! So that if you have the least doubt you ought not to bring him in guilty. Nothing but the clearest evidence ought to condemn a man to such a grievous end. Be pleased therefore to consult together".

FR. WEBB FREED

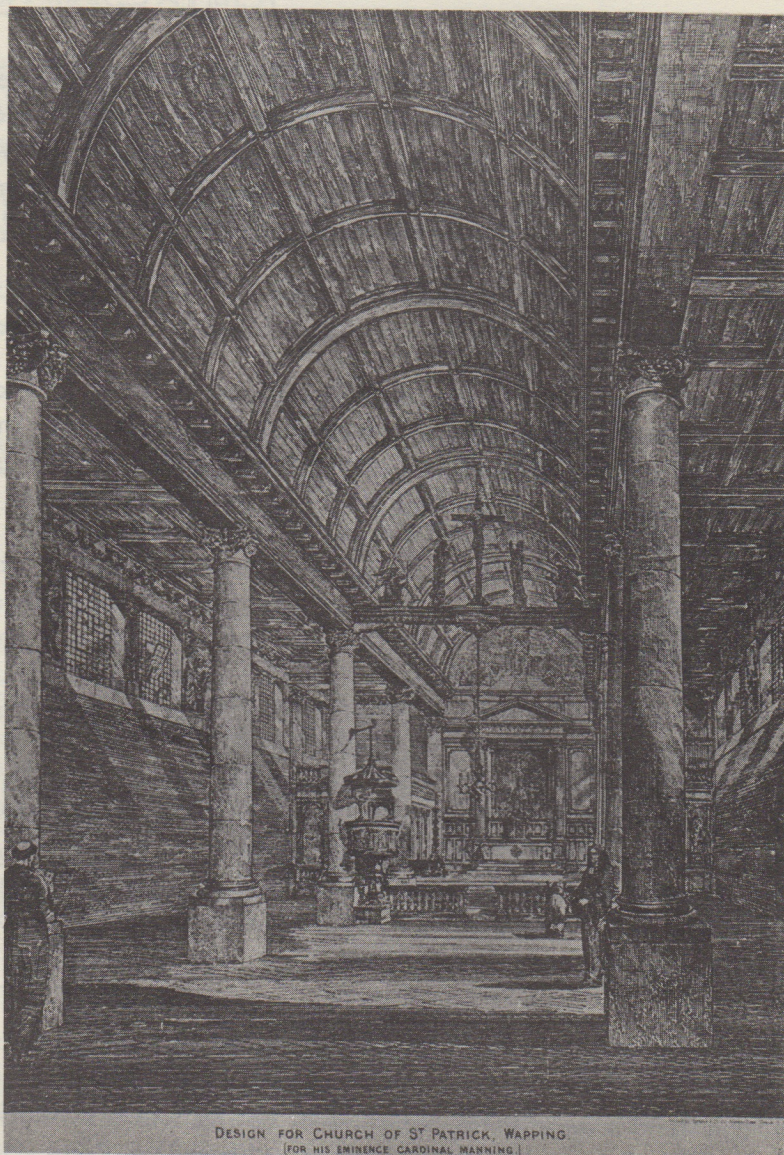
Fr. Webb was set free and returned to a triumphant welcome in Wapping. But he was completely broken down in health from his long term in prison. Lord Mansfield's judgement in favour of Fr. Webb had the effect of putting an end to the penal laws. From that time on, no other Catholic priest was successfully prosecuted.

MANSFIELD CENTENARY

By a coincidence, 1971 has been chosen as the time for a centenary exhibition at Kenwood, the North London villa built by Lord Mansfield. Lawyers from every part of the world have come to London to pay homage to the memory of that great judge and statesman who did more than perhaps any other man to bring humanity into the practice of law. He it was, who in yet another of many memorable judgements freed a negro slave confined aboard a ship in the pool of London. By so doing he set a precedent for world-wide antislavery laws.

THE JUDGE'S SECRETS

It will always remain an enigma, whether or not he was a Catholic. Several of his closest friends were known Catholics. Alexander Pope, the greatest English wit and poet of the age and an ardent Catholic, was Lord Mansfield's



DESIGN FOR CHURCH OF ST. PATRICK, WAPPING
[FOR HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL MANNING.]

Design of the Church made for Cardinal Manning.

friend and teacher from his earliest days. Pope also went to the Dorset home of old Sir John Webb at Great Canford. Fr. Webb was either the son or nephew of Sir John, whose daughter married the Jacobite Lord Derwentwater. Being a Scot, Lord Mansfield was cruelly appointed against his will as a young lawyer to take part in the prosecution of the Scottish Earls after the Jacobite Rebellion of '45. Lord Derwentwater, whom he knew well, died on the Tower Green scaffold as a consequence. Did Lord Mansfield know Fr. James Webb? That is a possibility and would explain his incredible feat of making an ass of the English law during the trial of the Wapping priest.

FR. COEN ARRIVES

Fr. Webb died at Virginia Street in the year 1794, but illhealth had obliged him to live away from the parish for the greater part of the years after his trial. Fr. Michael Coen was appointed priest-in-charge in 1773. Fr. Thomas Walsh and Fr. Copps were his assistants when the fury of the Gordon Riots broke upon the concealed little community in 1780.

GORDON RIOTS

Gordon was a religious fanatic, brodering on insanity. He stirred up the unemployed London mob with the promise of drink and the promise of looting, in defence of the Established religion, which he claimed was threatened by the easing of the penal laws against Catholics.

JUDGE ATTACKED

Mansfield was the special target of the 'No Popery' riots in June, which followed the passing of the Catholic Relief Bill. 'The General Protestant Association' assembled first in St. George's fields and marched to Parliament.

('Judge Attached' /Continued)

Mansfield, who was acting Speaker of the House, was caught in Parliament Street in his coach. By furious driving, the coachman saved his life. Thwarted, the mob sought out his house that evening. He and his wife were trapped inside by the howling mob. As the front door was battered in they escaped through the back garden. The house was set on fire and the wise Lord's library, which was acknowledged to be one of the finest in Europe, was thrown into Bloomsbury Square to light a bonfire of his less portable effects. The landlord of the Spaniards Inn, Highgate, saved Mansfield's beautiful villa from destruction by plying the thirsty rioters with spirits and sending them off in the wrong direction.

WAPPING TO BE DEFENDED

Newgate prison and many hundreds of other public buildings were set on fire, and one by one the Catholic Chapels were singled out by the uncontrollable crowd of rioters. Fr. Coen assembled a defence committee of several hundred of his more stalwart parishioners and for the first few weeks of rioting Lord Gordon kept clear of the narrow back streets to the east of the Tower. Fr. Coen then received a letter from the Secretary of State asking him to use his influence in preventing a pitched battle with the Irish who inhabited the waterfront and telling him to disband his committee. The letter also assured him of personal safety, and advanced notice should the mob attempt to make a move in the direction of Virginia Street.

CO-OPERATION ENDS IN DESTRUCTION

Perhaps out of too eager willingness to co-operate with the state, Fr. Coen went about urging his parishioners to go about their work or keep to their homes and not provoke trouble. Lord Gordon's General Association found Virginia Street one morning in late June. Fr. Copps escaped in the last extremity from the infuriated mob, who utterly destroyed the Chapel.

Fr. Coen said later that had he been given the slightest warning he could have assembled, within half-an-hour, three thousand men from the amongst the ballast getters and heavers of the port, and by their assistance have protected the Chapel, but he thought it right to yield to Government advice. No compensation was paid to him.

JUDGE FORGIVES

The 'No Popery' riots were put down with fusillades from the army. Gordon was brought to trial for his life before the 76-year-old Lord Chief Justice, and it says much for Mansfield's forgiving nature that he did not demand the head of the young oaf.

With such an example of true Christian charity, we would do well to end the account of Wapping in penal times, and while revering the faith and heroism shown by our ancestors we should never seek to conceal that in the name of Catholicism equal, and worse, excesses were committed against minorities in other lands.

WAPPING DISTRICT CHARITY SCHOOL

THE MINUTE BOOK

"Sunday, January 4th., 1807, at a meeting of the Committee for conducting the Wapping District Charity School for educating and clorhing the children of poor Catholics, at Mrs. McCarthy's, Wellclose Square. Present the following Gentlemen: Rev. Michael Coen, Jas. Delany, John Sergeant, Mr. Rooney, Mr. Swift, Capt. Scallon.

Robert Dudley, aged 9, living in Whitehorse Court. Rosemary Lane, being known, was admitted tonight on Mr. Lyons' fund."

So begins the earliest written record of the activities of the Wapping Schools. It was set down in a large minute book at a time when gentlemen were distinguished by wigs and lightweight court swards, and but a few years from that day when Nelson drove along Hermitage Street to buy his last half gallon of perfume, and other necessary aids for sea warfare, from the fashionable ships' chandler there. The threat which Napoleon Bonaparte posed to our little island had brought about a desire for peace and unity at home. The pressure was off for good, for the Catholic community, since the imaginary 'enemy in our midst' was now the revolutionary who preached the pruning of royal heads. English Protestants even managed to muster up a slight sense of outrage, on hearing that 'Old Bony Blownapart' had made a prisoner of the Pope.

THE CHAPEL IS REBUILT

While in other lands churches were being set ablaze, or used as stables by the passing Emperor, quietly and unmolested the Wapping Catholics went about re-building their Chapel in Kings Head Alley. A seventy year lease was taken on the land, and what was left over, after the building cost was met, was used to rend a house and hire the services of a school-master for the ever increasing number of youngsters who survived the perils of infancy. Fr. Michael Coen baptized 36 infants in 1773.

From 1780 onwards, the average in his register rose to 250 baptisms. Most were the children of Irish parents; refugees, driven out from farmlands once their own by rapacious English landlords. Since a cheap labour force was needed for the mighty works of the Industrial Revolution, they, the Irish, like the children of Israel in Pharaoh's time, came to cut the endless canals called 'navigables' and 'navvy' also the 40 foot deep water docks, with shovel rope and wicker basket.

THE FIRST SCHOOLMASTER

Mr. Kelly was the first schoolmaster of Wapping mentioned in the Committee minute book. There were others before him, since the school was flourishing long before 1800, as a stone tablet once at Johnson Street testified. In 1808, Mr. Kelly moved his family and schoolroom from an unknown place near Virginia Street to a house in Dock Street, rented from Mr. Nolan, one of the Committee members. There the schoolmaster educated thirty eight boys, by the slate, chalk, cane and talk method.

SCHOOL UNIFORMS

The boys were dressed at the expense of the Committee in 25 shilling outfits, consisting of two tone grey worsted suits, white shirts and stockings, hats and buckled shoes. Later, the long many-buttoned jacket and knee length breeches were made of grey velveteen. Mr. Kelly was 'ticked-off' by the Committee for letting two girls be educated at the school. Presumably, they were his daughters. Learning for girls was generally thought to be a waste of time and money.

ST. PATRICK'S

GOLDEN JUBILEE

WAPPING

CELEBRATION



The late
Rev. Fr. F. C. Beckley, MR.



Rev. Fr. David Hickley, First Rector of the Mission

ROSARY SUNDAY

2ND OCTOBER

1921



Rev. Fr. C. Sims.

Jubilee Church Presentation held in the School after High Mass.

SCHOOL BENEFACTORS

It was the privilege of each subscriber to the Charity to suggest names of boys to fill places in the class, as these became available. Mr. Lyons was one of the more wealthy benefactors. The McCarthy brothers, coal importers, of Wellclose Square, also paid considerable sums and served many years on the Committee. Poor attendance was not tolerated by the Committee, nor were trifling excuses, such as that advanced by a lady who was asked to explain her son's absence. She told the Committee her son no longer had his shoes, and they advised her to send him without them.

Poor Robert Dudley, the first known Wapping schoolboy, could have been no descendant of Queen Elizabeth's favourite. At the age of ten he lost his place at the Charity School, because his father sent him out to work. One feels that the Committee were altogether too harsh on little John Duncan, when in February, 1818, he was dismissed because his parent had pawned his school clothing.

TROUBLES BETWEEN MANAGERS AND STAFF

Mr. Kelly, who was employed at a salary of £31 - 10 shillings a year, left in a huff. It seems that after the departure of Fr. Coen he could no longer please the Committee in whatever he did. He resented the constant interference of Mr. Sidney, one of the members, in the day to day running of the school. Mr. Sidney also brought about the dismissal of the second schoolmaster to be appointed, a Mr. Michael O'Reilly. He was reported for not keeping regular hours and opening the school late in the morning. Despite these minor scandals, the good work of the Committee and the Industry of masters and pupils shine through the pages of the old record book. Before Mr. O'Reilly's departure the school made a move to larger premises in Wallbridge Street, where we learn that the master held sway with book and cane beside an open fireplace, while the boys, now seventy in number, sat in tiers before him. So that nothing should distract them from their studies, the windows were set high in the walls.

SCHOOL MOVES TO RED LION STREET

Michael Casey, the third master and a relative of the McCarthy brothers, took the Wapping Charity School to No. 14-15, Red Lion Street (now Reardon Street). The freehold of the big, three-storey, building was bought for £400 from the Dundee Lodge of Freemasons, who had erected the place some sixty years previously, when there was a small Scottish community living in Wapping. Bishop Poynter, Fr. Dobson, Fr. Horrobin, William Warner and others were signatories to the deed of purchase on Lady Day, 1821. From the autumn of that year, the Wapping Schools have an unbroken record of one hundred and fifty years service.

FEASTING AND FUND RAISING

A handbill, circulated by Fr. Dobson, appealed for contributions to pay for the education of eighty boys and thirty girls at the school, and to help save even more children from a life of ignorance and depravity, leading to the gallows. But a far more successful method of drumming up funds was the annual banquet. The most celebrated dining rooms in London were hired in turn for these gay and sumptuous events. Gentlemen with kind hearts, long purses and no concern for their waistline, were sought out, or attracted by the menu and the good company. Many were non-Catholic business men.

SUCCESSFUL APPEALS

When the assembled diners were suitably mellowed by almond stuffed capons and portwine, Fr. Coen or Fr. Dobson would stand, toast the Prince Regent, and quickly get to work on their consciences. After hearing a start and eloquent account of little mudlark boys and girls, shivering in their ignorance, on the steps of Wapping Old Stairs, consciences were eased a little at the price of a few extra guineas in the hat. One can imagine that the speech often ended with a polite and oblique reference to the problems that the camel had with the eye of a needle, since there were some generous legacies to the Charity. In the 1830's Richard Neale left £10,000 and Charles Jacob Wilkinson left £4,725.

EMINENT PATRONS

The Duke of Norfolk, Lord Petre of Ingatestone and other Catholic survivors of the Reformation, took turns as presidents at the annual dinner and gave their patronage to the schools. Just to underline the change in attitude towards Catholics which took place in the early 19th Century, His Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex dined with the Charity organizers at the Fenchurch St. Tavern and the Lord Mayor of London was a frequent guest.

DANIEL O'CONNELL 'THE LIBERATOR'

(1775 - 1847)

CAHIRCIVEEN

Into this almost Pickwickian scene of feasting, fund raising and titled patrons came the most illustrious of all Commoners, Daniel O'Connell, round about the year 1820. O'Connell was a lawyer who had been debarred from practice by the anti-Catholic nature of the oath which he had to swear. He came of a family which had managed to retain a few acres of land near Cahirciveen. A generous local Protestant held the land in trust for the true owners and helped them to elude the grasp of confiscation on all property, under a law of 1699. It was, in the early days of O'Connell's childhood, against the law for an Irish Catholic to rent a farm, own a horse, keep a school, or learn a trade, or profession.

ELECTED CANDIDATE FOR CLARE

O'Connell, though unentitled to sit in Parliament, stood as candidate for County Clare in 1829, and was elected by a huge majority. Great excitement was caused at this event and the Catholic population of London thronged to hear him when he came to claim his seat. Few amongst his natural enemies could resist his golden tongued oratory, and those who did were devastated, not with insults, but with his natural Gaelic wit and humour.

CENTRE FOR HIS CAMPAIGN

Wapping now being the hub of the Irish community in the South of England, O'Connell selected the Red Lion Street schoolbuilding as a centre from which to operate while in the Capital. Regularly, each Sunday he was mobbed and

cheered as he drove through the narrow streets to hear Mass in the Chapel. The poorest of the poor called in at Red Lion Street to pay a Copper towards the campaign he started for 'Emancipation' of Catholics. The British government gave way eventually and O'Connell took his seat in the House.

DISAPPROVAL OF VIOLENCE

'The Liberator' as he was from then on called, disapproved of any form of violence to advance the cause of Irish freedom and he achieved much in moderating the attitude of the English ruling class, by his own example of reasonableness. For eighteen years he worked, much of the time in London, in organizing the election of the other M.P.'s from his homeland and whipping up publicity for the repeal of the 'Act of Union' with England, which had caused so much misery in the Emerald Isle.

O'CONNELL SPEAKS FOR WAPPING

The poorest of the poor helped him, and he in return always lent his eloquent voice to the Wapping District Charity School. From 1823 onwards he drew great interest from high society in the workings of the Charity, which now aided pupils from as far afield as Hackney and Mile End Town. A few amongst the Committee members feared that O'Connell's political activities would put-off some of the generous non-Catholic contributors. Mr. Philips, the Committee treasurer in 1825, wrote to the London press. A letter from him in 'The Courier' deplors the fact that the annual dinner would be held in Lent that year, and expresses concern that Daniel O'Connell is again to be the chief speaker. As can be imagined, his letter caused an uproar and his resignation was demanded at the next monthly meeting.

HELPS IN FUND RAISING

O'Connell made his Lenten speech, which raised on the spot the enormous sum for those days of £330. 14 shillings. Both men patched up the quarrel at the dinner, and to atone for his insult, Mr. Phillips brought the sum up to £503. 16s 6d. from his own purse.

Again in 1834, O'Connell raised a princely sum, and it is recorded that he ended his speech by emptying his pockets of £8. The Duke of Norfolk then drew out £10, and P. Laton, M.P., rummaged around and found a pound.

INVESTITURE

On Sunday, 17th March, 1844, St. Patrick's Day, Mr. O'Connell was invested with the Order of the Guild of St. Joseph and Mary, at Virginia Street Chapel. The Illustrated London News sent a reporter and engraver to record the event.

The illustration they published shows the 64 year old M.P. kneeling at the high altar, now the Lady Chapel Altar in St. Patrick's.

THE WEARING OF THE GREEN

The scene as the venerable statesman entered the Chapel, accompanied by the Chaplains of the Guild, Fr. Moore and Fr. Foley, was described with lively detail by the reporter. There were 300 members of the Order present. The women were habited in green dresses, with sashes and white Leghorn bonnets; the men in green cloaks, trimmed with white fur, white collars and caps similar to those worn by graduates. The whole Chapel was expensively decorated with waxed flowers. Wreaths of shamrock were placed beneath the old Spanish painting of Jesus and Mary on the high altar.

After Vespers were sung, and a long homily on the duties and a purpose of the order delivered by Mr. Moore, the grand old man proceeded to the altar steps, where a magnificent green and white silk cloak, lined and trimmed with ermine was placed about his shoulders. Fr. Moore then presented him with a solid gold cross and placed on his head a Genoa velvet cap.

PROCESSION TO SHADWELL

Shortly after, the whole assembly processed in its finery out of the Chapel and through the streets to the schoolrooms in Love Lane, Shadwell, but recently opened by the Charity. They were accompanied by between five and six thousand parishioners. Because of his infirmity, the newly invested Guild member was driven in a coach and four along Ratcliffe Highway to the schoolrooms, where the assemblage was so immense that he found great difficulty in entering.

O'CONNEL'S HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

Inside a memorial scroll was presented to him by Father Moore whose speech was punctuated with vociferous cheering from within and outside the building. O'Connell then stepped outside to a specially erected platform and his fervent sonorous words poured out once more to the entranced throng. He thanked them for their tribute to him, with his own unique mixture of wit and wisdom, and he spoke hopefully about the future of his native land.

THE GREAT HUNGER

By the next Feast of St. Patrick, the 'Great Hunger' gripped all Ireland in silent mockery of O'Connell's hopes. For almost a million peasants the green valleys became blighted sepulchres, where they waited in simple resignation to the Divine will, and sang for as long as they could around the peat fires. Yet another million fled to the seaports. From Skibbereen 'where they ate the dead donkey' and Cork, where they were shipped as human ballast, the Irish refugees found their way to Wapping and elsewhere. Less than two thirds reached their destinations alive.

MORE ARRIVALS TO WAPPING

The potato blight, combined with callousness of absentee landlords, turned Ireland into a frightening wilderness and halved its population in the long years of 1847 and 1848. The burden this brought to already overcrowded Wapping was but a minor consequence; though significant in our little history, since long memories alive in the parish today can hark back to a grandparent, who escaped the hunger and arrived proud, but penniless, on Wapping shore.

THE FUCHSIA PLANT OF WAPPING

The flowering Fuchsia hedges of Ireland all grew from a single plant, brought home from the South American jungle by an 18th Century Wapping sailor, as a present to his wife. Legend has it that each solemn, purple flowered, hedge marks the spot where a poor famished soul dropped in exhaustion by the wayside, during those terrible times.

O'Connell died while on a pilgrimage to Rome; his end hastened by a great anguish for his suffering countrymen.

DECLINE IN PROSPERITY

Prosperity slipped downstream from Wapping during the early part of the last century. The East India Company merchant ships, with their carved and gilded sterns and menacing gun-ports, were now tied up in Poplar dock and their produce was carried direct to the City along the newly constructed Commercial Road. Short-circuited by the Commercial Road and carved in two by London Dock, the old shipping neighbourhood lost its national importance, and became a storage area, for the most part. Two hundred and more 'pubs on stilts', from Frying Pan Stairs to the Tower Gate, gave place to a wall of warehouses, shutting out the Southern sun. Alexander, the Wapping architect of these monuments to toil and 'Bondage' based their design on 'The Prisons' a series of romantic drawings by the Italian artist Piranesi. Later, he built Dartmoor.

RACK RENTS

As the docks and warehouses closed in, the sea captains and other prosperous merchants sold up and left. Their many roomed town houses were bought by rack-rent landlords, who herded in the Irish immigrants, often two families to a room. More profitable still were the many lodging houses; where a few pence would buy a much slept in bed and the privilege of being allowed to dangle a small piece of mutton, with string and label attached, in the communal kitchen pot. For most Wapping people at that time, all semblance of family life broke down under this awful system. One can hardly condemn, on looking back, those poor slaves of an unjust society who sought a cheap escape from sordid reality in the warm and cheery pubs.

VIRGINIA STREET CHAPEL CUT OFF

One brief sentence, from the 1840's suffices to explain the departure of Fr. Dobson: "Died in the Debtor's Prison at Marshalsea." He was attempting to build a new church and evidently someone foreclosed on the debt.

Time was running out for Virginia Street when Fr. Horrobin took over. The Chapel was cut off from most of Wapping by the London Dock; the lease was almost terminated, and the Dock Company were pressing to secure the complete enclosure of their bonded wharves.

THE CHAPEL IS DEMOLISHED

Since their parish now extended as far as Shoreditch and Poplar, Fr. Horrobin and Fr. Foley, his curate, wisely spent every available penny, in 1842, to purchase the freehold of a big patch of land beside the Commercial Road. St. Mary and St. Michael's Church was well under way, though steeped in debt, when Fr. Horrobin passed on the burden towards the end of the year 1853.

Dismantling the venerable old Chapel was the sad task left to his successor, Fr. William Kelly. Fr. Kelly later proved to be a veritable financial wizard and in an amazingly few years he had the parish free of debt, with a splendidly furnished and decorated church for his faithful flock.

One man who helped in the removal of furnishings and fittings from the old Chapel was Mr. Potter, and he, in his great old age, related something of what happened to Canon Ring. The lighter furnishings and a number of old volumes of Parish Registers were removed to Johnson Street School. The High Altar was taken down and stored in the basement of Red Lion Street, where Mr. Scott and Mr. Gilmartin were sometime headmasters.

All the ancient record books, which must have contained a wealth of information about the early times of the Chapel, were alas destroyed during the bombing of St. Mary's and St. Michael's, in the last war.

FATHER BENTLEY COPIES MINUTE BOOK

Providence guided good old Canon Reardon, when he sent Fr. Bentley to Commercial Road in the 1920's, with a battered type-writer and strict instructions not to come back until he had copied out the Wapping Charity Minute Books. Fr. Bentley's first book of type script is now our only link with a long past, peopled with Priests and laymen, who for their labours then, now rank amongst the Saints.

THE WORKHOUSE

The Werkiss, as it was called, had become an embarrassment to the Parish Council of St. John of Wapping. It covered the ground directly to the East of their church, as far as Red Lion Street. Though not an old structure, having been erected in 1818 at great expense for the undeserving poor, the rates collected in the Parish were never sufficient either to keep it in good shape, or to pay a generous lump sum to the Workhouse Master, to maintain the inmates in a similar condition.

The Novelist Charles Dickens had portrayed some of the grim scenes inside when he wrote Chapter III of 'The Uncommercial Traveller.' Stepney Guardians of the Poor had taken over, following the notoriety which Dickens brought to it. A more efficient, but no more inviting, colony was opened at Bow in 1865, and there the able bodied paupers of Wapping were sent; while the elderly, whose lifelong dread it was to end in such a place, the young, the sick and the mentally deranged were provided for in Farthing Fields Infirmary. Previously, all had to live together. Mentally ill women were left to look after children, and children were born in the same single ward in which small-pox and every other infection was being treated.

FATHER HICKEY SENT TO START THE PARISH

The dreaded Werkiss was an abandoned expanse of ugly brickwork, when Cardinal Manning sent Fr. David Hickey to start the Parish of St. Patrick in the Autumn of 1871. Fr. Hickey made the first overtures about purchasing the site for his new Church.

BUYING THE SITE

St. John's Parish Council had several years of legal tussle before they succeeded in claiming back the Workhouse buildings, and then, quite naturally, they were not anxious to sell to Cardinal Manning's emissary. But no other offers came, at the high price set for the acre of £7,250. The prospect of yet another 'Popish plot' and that in the back yard of their own Church, must have saddened the heart of many a good Protestant Councillor. All the same, reasonableness

was shown when the money was secured and only two conditions were made on the deed of sale. First, that the Cardinal should pay their legal expenses, and second, that the Church should have no belfry to compete with their own, in chiming the hours of Divine service.

"THEY KNELT IN THE RUBBLE"

On Sunday afternoon, 15th July, 1877, a remarkable assembly took place in the grounds of the future Church. About the middle of the site, with its back to the East, a little platform had been erected under a beautiful tree; the branches of which sheltered the speakers from the alternate sunshine and showers which that year marked St. Swithin's Day. The purpose of the meeting was clear from a bright green banner held aloft, emblazoned with the effigy of St. Patrick. Drum and fife bands of The League of the Cross had marched at the head of the vast concourse on its way to the meeting.

Their beating now stopped and one half of all East London's Catholics knelt in the rubble as the saintly Cardinal stepped from his carriage. His presence brought an immediate grandeur to the dingy surroundings; nor was it simply the baroque magnificence of his red robes. Here was truly a prince come amongst his well loved people.

CARDINAL MANNING ON THE SITE

His Eminence gave an impressive speech to the throng, in which facts and hopes were put together like the seeds of a pomegranate. At the end of his talk, all joined with him in saying three 'Aves' for those who had contributed so generously to the St. Patrick's building fund. Fr. Angelo Lucas, son of the Irish M.P. and newly appointed Parish Priest of St. Patrick's, replied to Cardinal Manning with a good humoured speech in which he alluded to the embarrassment he was under because of the Cardinal's generosity in giving him, amongst other benefactions, such large share in a large debt.

THE AMATEUR ARCHITECT

At Archbishop's House Cardinal Manning found time to indulge in one of his many varied talents, that of amateur architect. Two newspaper articles of the time state that St. Patrick's was designed by the Cardinal to his own tastes. This is not strictly correct, since Manning employed Francis Tasker, the nephew of an old family friend, Countess Tasker, to put scale to his plans. Francis W. Tasker, built Lewisham and numerous other fine churches in the late 19th century, but St. Patrick's is not typical of his style.

While still a young man, as the Anglican Rector of Graffam in Sussex, the Cardinal had, re-built his Church in the pious, gloomy gothic, style of his friend Pugin. People grumbled that they had to grope around banging their knees in the dark. At East Lavington, where his wife is buried, the Cardinal built again in the gothic style. He was then Dean of Chichester Cathedral and Rector of the Anglican Seminary for Ministers. Not many years after the death of his wife, Manning was converted and brought with him into the Faith several other prominent figures in the High Anglican movement.

ITALIAN STYLE

In later, life the Cardinal became an admirer of all things Italian. For this reason, at the height of the gothic craze, St. Patrick's was built, in 1879, as a simple Tuscan barn with the grand interior of a North Italian renaissance church by Palladio. The inside walls were originally white brick, with a contrasting red brick dado, and perhaps it's as well that they are now painted. The much painted bath stone columns, which are amongst the finest in existence, have now returned to their natural colour. Yellow fir, left clean from the plane, was used for the barrel vault. It too is now varnished.

"THE DEATH OF THE VIRGIN"

A large painting, once hanging in the old Chapel may well have been the direct inspiration for the Cardinal's design. The painting is an important curiosity in the story of art, since it remains the only copy of a lost fresco wall painting, done for the Church of St. Peter in Bologna, by Ercole de' Roberti. The fresco scene was of 'The Death of the Virgin' and as one of

the lamenting Apostles, the great artist painted his own portrait, about the year 1480. De'Roberti's church interior background to the composition shows more than a general similarity to the woodwork and stone in our Church of St. Patrick.

After years of neglect, the damaged, but still superb, old copy in oil and canvas of De'Roberti's fresco was sold by the Canon, to provide boots and shoes for his scholars, in the bad days of the General Strike. It is now in the Ringling Museum, Florida.

FATHER LUCAS BEGINS BUILDING

Bills preserved by Canon Reardon show with what speed Fr. Lucas got going on his new church. He was a man who knew exactly where to get what he wanted and at the cheapest price. By employing directly craftsmen and labourers he had the shell of the main workhouse building converted to a temporary church by November. The High Altar from Virginia Street was re-erected, but the altar table was replaced with one from the Strand Oratory of Cardinal Newman, once in King William Street. This altar table still has its fine predella, or front, of arabesque floral ornaments, painted in the mid 18th century. 'The Amateur Architect'.

OTHER BUILDINGS

Fr. Angelo Lucas skilfully adapted the workhouse buildings to the Cardinals plans. In July 1877, after the great meeting, he had got William Driscoll to build the Sacristy entirely from materials salvaged from the site, and up against the thick wall which was to be the South side of the Church. Mr. Stokes of Anchor and Hope Alley then patched up the first St. Patrick's Club house from a ruin on the site of the present Junior School. The Club was opened on October 31st 1877. For just £1,000 Fr. Lucas built the Presbytery, employing various local contractors, but as clerk of the works he engaged B.E. Nightingale of Albert Embankment. To Francis Tasker he paid £25 for the house plans.



Father Beckley with the League of the Cross Drum and Fife Band.

Amongst the cut price bargains, eagerly sought in the columns of the daily newspapers, came the organ from Liverpool Cathedral. It was very probably evicted for damage to the fabric, for when the mighty blower was opened out full throttle in St. Patrick's, it literally lifted the tiles from the roof. Over the years, and with the aid of 'Old Chuck' the organist, who tended to get carried away with emotion at weddings and funerals, it caused infinitely more expense than the £100 paid for it by Fr. Angelo.

DEPARTURE TO ANOTHER PARISH

Having completed his work at St. Patrick's Fr. Lucas was whisked away to start again from scratch in a new parish. A bit heartless this may have seemed to his parishioners, but the Cardinal knew best where a man of his capabilities could be employed. Of him, as is written on the tomb of Wren, if you seek a monument then look around you.

FRANCIS COTTER BECKLEY

(14th March 1843 - 22nd March 1908)

MEETING THE PEOPLE

After saying his first Mass in Wapping Church, Fr. Beckley went out onto the steps to greet his people. As he stood there shaking hands, an old lady touched his arm and said, "We were very fond of our last Priest, Father. I expect in time we will get to like you."

The Good Priest needed no time to get straight to the hearts of his parishioners. For twenty seven years, his feet wore the threshold of their doors, while he grew from robust manhood to painful old age looking after their spiritual and material needs.

POVERTY

He was born to a modestly well-off family, from the suburb of Islington and received his training for the Priesthood at St. Edmund's and Valladolid, Portugal. He came to Wapping from St. Patrick's Soho, at a time when the wealth of the world lay as spoils at the feet of the mighty Empire, and yet in Rycroft Court, off Gravel Lane, emaciated mothers wept because they had not the price of a jug of milk for their children; and Ben Tillett saw grown men pitch over and faint from hunger as they waited for a ticket to work in the docks.

ENCOURAGING THE PEOPLE

Fr. Beckley was no cloudy social idealist, but he did play a part in fermenting new ideas and encouraging the many intelligent and self-educated working men of his parish to lead the way, as Moses did of old, out of the want and misery which was their lot in life. He saw the way ahead as a long a triple road, of education, civic duty and no booze.

RE-BUILDING WAPPING SCHOOLS

On each count, his own example was there to follow. "The Practical Educationalist" as he called himself in his election manifestos, fought and won with huge majorities a place on various local and county authorities. Until his time, out of fifty five places on the London School Board, only two were held by Catholics. To his eternal credit also must go the re-building of the Wapping schools; opening places for more than six hundred children.

FATHER BECKLEY'S HELPERS

Though his Sacred Office forbade him to give his open support to any political faction, privately, his correspondence shows that he was a powerful local ally of the Wedgwood Benn clan of 19th century liberal reformers. He always urged the men of the parish to stop mooning about the long lost homeland and to get down to the reality of shaping their own destiny and the surroundings in which they lived. Mr. John Hartman, the generous and affable Wapping Postmaster, was with Fr. Beckley's initial encouragement, elected through most of the important local offices. Mr. Keefe and Mr. Keenan were also outstanding men of local affairs at that time. In addition to their many functions as J.P.'s and Guardians of the poor etc., they were thoroughly helpful to Fr. Beckley as school managers. Each Sunday, at High Mass, the latter two were said to have vied with one another in a kind of hostile duet. Both had a powerful voices, but Mr. Keenan had the edge on his rival vocally, and with a chisel too, for he carved the bench ends on the High Altar in his spare time during the week.

TEMPERANCE AND THE LEAGUE OF THE CROSS

Drunkenness was the great vice of the 18th and 19th centuries. For the poor working man and woman it dulled the sense of present evil and gave a rosiness to what was to come. The pubs flourished because of the hopeless discomfort at home and the curse of casual labour broke men at an early age, leaving them little else to do for much of the week.

DRUM AND FIFE BAND

Total abstinence was Fr. Beckley's hard remedy; and who can doubt but that it was the right one for that age? Regularly each Sunday afternoon he would take his box onto Tower Hill and fulminate against drink with the best of temperance preachers. In order to draw the crowd, he formed a branch of The League of the Cross in the early years of his time at Wapping. The League was already famed for its drum and fife and pipe bands, and with Bandmaster William Hyde, Wapping soon held premier place in the League, to use a modern idiom.

VARIOUS OUTINGS

Once or twice a year the parish held a grand family outing to Margate, Rosherville Gardens, or inland, to the forest at Theydon Bois. A steamer was chartered from the General Steam Navigation Company and as it moved off on its course down river from Tunnel Pier the band entertained all on board. Fr. Beckley would sit in a deckchair smoking his pipe as vigorously as the steamer funnel itself, and when entreated would get up to give his rendition of 'Father "'Flynn' to add to the merriment. No alcoholic beverage was the strict rule on these occasions; though what the poor perspiring bandsmen did when they got to Margate is not recorded.

'OLD TIM'

Years later, in 1910, Fr. Donelan opened a Catholic Mens' Club in the Father Mathew Hall, Lowder Street. There the Wapping band would practice under the direction of Mr. Timothy O'Brien, 'Old Tim' as he was called, to distin-

guish him from his lately deceased son. Mr. O'Brien had been a Bandmaster at the Royal Military School of Music, and few Royal Regiments could boast of a band so versatile in its airs and so precise in its footwork and appearance whenever it marched out. Several national competitions were won by the Wapping band during the inter-war years.

THE CARDINAL AND THE DOCKER'S TANNER

WINTER 1888

The winter of 1888/9 was dreadful and there was much distress in the parish, as Fr. Beckley recorded from time to time in the School Log Books. Basically what was wrong was that all the Dock Companies had reached the point of bankruptcy. Numerous petty Wharfingers had for years fought a trade war of merciless competition between one another instead of sharing around the trade, as was the original purpose of the Dock Companies. Their pawns were the dock labourers, who would fight one another like tigers for the last handful of flung work tickets at the dock gate, and then having carried off a ticket, might sell it for twopence because they could not work without a meal.

PATHETIC INCIDENTS

A cartoon done in Wapping of that time shows a returning docker with no ticket, entering a room completely devoid of furniture with the lifeless body of his wife stretched on the boards. The drawing is entitled: "The secret of England's greatness. Five pence per hour." A humorous, but no less pathetic incident from Fr. Beckley's Wapping, happened in a tea warehouse at the top of Dundee Street. A certain notorious Wharfinger in top hat and iron watch chain prowled through his warehouse one morning and noticed a young man standing apparently idle. With a bellow, he threw five pence at him and swore he would never work anywhere in the docks again. The young man hastened away with the money, concealing a wry grin. He happened to be a van boy waiting for his dray to be loaded outside. Though none of the correspondence now remains, there can be not much doubt that Fr. Beckley kept the aged Cardinal informed of the state of his parishioners. They were in the habit of passing short notes to one another on various topics.

THE CARDINAL INTERVENES IN THE STRIKE

When the great strike came in the summer of 1889, the Cardinal decided to intervene. He came to Wapping and to Limehouse, where fiery Fr. Higley was in his first year, to see the situation for himself. Tillet, Mann and Tom McCarthy forced the dockers' tanner from the employers, but were then confronted with their intention of not paying it until the beginning of 1890, or else not at all. The awful spectre of the strike dragging on through the winter, with real starvation facing many families, was arrested by Cardinal Manning. "I claim for labour the rights of capital", he said. "For it is capital in the truest sense...whatever rights capital possesses, labour possesses. I am a Mosaic Radical and my theories are rooted in the suffering of the people. It is not true that such contests are the private affairs of masters and men. For the rich can take care of themselves, but who will speak for the poor?"

OFFICIAL ARBITRATOR

Despite the many tirades hurled at him by 'The Times' to the effect that he was a socialist agitator, the Cardinal retained his enormous prestige and the Government willingly let him become the official arbitrator in the dispute. At Wade Street, Poplar, he concluded a pact with Tillet and Mann, for the dockers, and McCarthy for the stevedores, that they should get their tanner from November, 4th. He then went back and presented the employers with his decision, which they had no alternative but to accept.

The Cardinal, who did so much for Wapping and the riverside neighbourhood, died not long after the strike, in 1892. Said Tom Mann in his Memoirs. "His face was most arresting, so thin, so saintlike and so kindly. In the whole of my life, I have never seen another like unto it."

THE OUTDOOR PROCESSIONS

The first outdoor procession in honour of Our Lady of Ransom took place in May, 1884. We learn of it from a letter to Fr. Beckley, warning him that there might be trouble if the bands marched through the streets to join the procession. It came from the Cardinal, in his own hand, and says "...the little voices are too much for me." But the bands marched and there was no trouble; nor has there even been to mar the fervour of each annual public declaration of the true Faith of Our Fathers. What more can be written



Interior of the Church in Canon Reardon's day

of a brilliant pageant, still so central in the yearly round of parish life? The passing of time has stilled so many hearts that once beat high with joy. But the radiant faces of little girls in white dresses, they have changed more slowly through family resemblance across the eighty and more years.

We can but hope that the future will see again a direct counterpart to Mr. Fleming, striding out with his three hundred schoolboys, behind the banner of St. Joseph. But it is doubtful if there will ever be a choirmaster of Bill Keenan's stamp, who, with baton under arm, marched with fifty equally lusty voices and sang, unknowingly, of James Webb and other Fathers chained in prisons dark.

CHARLES WILLOCK-DAWES

Charles Willock-Dawes (1820-1899) was a self-effacing man of God, who nevertheless will always rank first in place of honour among the benefactors of our parish. He was an Anglican clergyman, who took part in the Oxford Movement, which tried to revive in the Church of England some of the lost splendours of doctrine and ritual belonging to Catholic England of pre-formation times. Sensing finally that he was little more than a 'jackdaw in peacock's feathers' when he vested himself in the ceremonial robes of a Catholic Priest, he joined Manning and became a convert.

Celibacy debarred him from the Priesthood, so with his wife Mary, he took to farming in the region of Petworth in Sussex, where once both he and Manning held the livings of Anglican parishes. Almost a millionaire, by modern standards, Mr. Dawes got Pugin the architect to erect for him a fine gothic country house at Burton Hill. Above the porch, he placed his jackdaw emblem.

THE CARDINAL ASKS MR DAWES FOR HELP

Shortly before his death, the Cardinal asked Mr Dawes to help Father Beckley out of the deep well of debt, into which he had got himself, by building again the Wapping schools. As a memorial to the good Cardinal, Charles Dawes decided to pay-off the whole debt and to complete and beautify his Church. He sent Father Beckley a cheque for £5,000 and a tiny snapshot showing himself, in lonely old age, standing amid the ruins of the Parthenon in Athens. Three thousand, paid what was owed for the school; the rest went to amplify the Church, with baptismal font, High Altar, new benches for the whole Church and among many other items, the iron railing and gateway outside. An alabaster Alter was purchased from Italy to replace the old Chapel

Altar, and a modest artist called Greenwood undertook to paint the tryptich of the Crucifixion with Mater Dolorosa and St. John.

THE WILL OF MR. DAWES

Within two years of completing St. Patricks, Mr. Dawes died of bronchitis at his seaside home at Hove. He left as his own monument the Church of the Sacred Heart, Petworth, which is well nigh the most perfect gem of Victorian gothic architecture. There his bones repose in a beautiful marble tomb, at the entrance to the Lady Chapel. Nobody, apart from Fr. Donelly the parish priest, and his housekeeper Miss Ellen King, attended Charles Dawes funeral. He had not one single relative alive, and Fr. Beckley was too ill to attend. To the Jesuits he gave Burton Hill, as their retirement home. His will shows that he left £118,039 to the diocese of Southwark, and the contents of his wine cellar to Fr. Donelly of Petworth. Though many churches were erected with that money, Charles Dawes, at his own request, remained everywhere anonymous. He died on Christmas day; what better day could there be to remind the people of Wapping to pray for the repose of his Soul.

THE SISTERS

SISTERS OF MERCY

Father William Kelly, first Rector of Commercial Road, felt the acute need of a Religious Community in his vast parish. He went to Ireland, and persuaded the Convent at Tullamore to send six Sisters of Mercy to East London. He established them at No. 535, Commercial Road, on 1st March, 1859. Towards the end of that month, Mother Patrick and another Sister commenced work in the Wapping Schools. Mother Patrick took charge of the infant Department, which she retained until 1884. Mother Joseph was in charge of the Girls School from 1863-1875, when she was succeeded by Mother Mary Alphonsus who taught there until 1884.

The Sisters walked to Wapping every day, and for twenty five years nursed the sick under appalling conditions, never relenting in their work even when cholera and smallpox swept through the parish. One of their many distinguished pupils was John Hartman, J.P., who went to Mother Patrick's class, at the age of 1 year and 9 months!

SISTERS OF ST FRANCIS DE SALES

With the expansion of the Commercial Road parish, the sisters re-directed their efforts. Fr. Beckley, therefore, wrote to Paris inviting the French Sisters of St. Francis de Sales to Wapping. Three of them came to live in a ruinous old house Fr. Beckley had found for them in Bird Street; they were Sister Ann (Mme. Toneri) who was in charge, Sister Francis and Sister Dominic. They had to sleep under open umbrellas, for the roof was riddled with holes. As a result of these conditions, the tiny and much liked Sister Francis died of pneumonia, at the house.

They too continued the work in the schools, and visited the sick and inmates of the Workhouse Infirmary. A short while before they were called away to a mission in India, they moved into the former presbytery at No. 11 Red Lion Street.

MICHAEL SWEENEY

Priests of their Order would, from time to time, come and help out Father Beckley. One of these, having difficulty in reading the Gospel and notices in English, did the remarkable thing in those days of asking the 12, year old altar server to do it for him. The boy was Michael Sweeney, who later celebrated his first Mass on that same altar. Fr. Sweeney, who was one of Mr. Fleming's star pupils, joined the Mill Hill Fathers and was sent to Africa. There after incredible adventures, which included almost being eaten by a lion, he found his way to Buvuma Island, in Lake Victoria. The Buvuma were 40,000 strong and a fierce tribe, which worshipped a huge bloated crocodile. Whenever they felt the need, they would beat a drum and the beast would emerge from the lake, at the familiar sound, to feast on a human sacrifice. The Wapping schoolboy converted many of them during the three short years before he caught the blackwater fever and died, on December 8th, 1903.

VISITS FROM THE SISTERS OF CHARITY

From 1893 to 1902, there was no Religious Order working in Wapping. Then in June 1902, Sister Teresa from the Convent of Mercy, Brentwood came to take charge of the Infants' Department in the new school. She, and several other Sisters, lived for a while on the top floor of Tower Buildings. Because they never managed to become a self-supporting community, the Sisters of Mercy once again had to withdraw, in January, 1906.

It must be assumed that the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul were visiting in Wapping about the time of the death of Father Beckley, for a letter of 19th October, 1909 from the Clerk to the Guardians of the Poor, gives them permission to call on the Catholic inmates of the Workhouse Infirmary.

'AS THEY HAVE LABOURED SO THEY ARE LOVED'

The Godly man who etched out the pattern of the religious life of our Parish and who, in the later years of his own life, became a legend, was called to his Maker. The Docks stood idle on the day of his funeral and the narrow alleys, he knew blindfold, reverberated to mournful music, as bands assembled from the surrounding parishes. Bishop Fenton pronounced the absolutions and many of his faithful that Thursday afternoon followed the slow moving procession to Kensal Green.

Within a short while, the Pieta was erected at the end of the Church, where many more have since said a prayer in his memory. His boyhood friend, Canon Carter of Hendon, wept as he unveiled the memorial.

FATHER WILLIAM DONELAN

In the shadow of his great predecessor, little is recorded of the two years pastorate of Fr. Donelan. We are not even certain of his Christian name, though this is presumed to be William. On his daily rounds of all the schools he was very particular to notice anything awry. The girls' mistress had to seek advice on aeration for her bell jars of goldfish, following one of his visits. The poor lady was sent post haste to the right place, namely the museum in St. George's park. On another occasion, the staff were sent measuring and hammering to make window boxes. But by far the most un-nerving of Fr. Donelan's habits was that of occasionally ringing the fire bell on his way in.

GALLANTRY OF MR. JOHN CLAYTON

On 24th March, 1909, the school chimney caught fire and ignited the wooden casing around the cistern on the roof. The school was cleared in half a minute, by the pocket watch of Mr. John Clayton, the Headmaster. The gallant head then climbed onto the roof and doused the fire with buckets of water. Mr. Clayton had taken over in 1906 from the austere and much respected Mr. Fleming who had been Headmaster for 26 of the 27 years of Fr. Beckley's ministry.

THE FIREBELL

Despite frequent false alarms, Fr. Donelan never managed to clear the school in under a minute. Finally, in exasperation, one of the good Sisters noticed that there was a similarity in tone between the firebell and the Presbytery door bell. When this rang one morning, the whole school scooted out like lightening, to greet the agitated figure of Fr. Donelan, hastening to see whether his school was a smouldering ruin.

It would be unjust to leave Fr. Donelan without recording that he personally provided and supervise breakfasts for needy children at The Gun Tavern, before school each morning. From some bountiful source he managed to call down a positive rain of new boots on the school, and the Staff grumbled a little at the time they had to spend fitting and matching these.

CHARITY AND FATHER SIMS

Father Charles Sims, who came in 1911, was by all accounts a 'Muscular Christian'. He worked hard to create a boys' club and encouraged boxing, football and camping expeditions to the Isle of Wight. He differed greatly from Fr. Beckley, in inviting well wishers from the Universities and the 'upper crust' to taking an active part in parochial affairs. Fr. Bentley's ambition, and a proud one, was to see Wapping pull itself up by its own boot-strings; if any. When the famous social historian, Charles Booth, interviewed him and enquired what bountiful activities there were in his parish, he told him straight, that while true Charity was the greatest of Christian virtues, his congregation could be relied upon to pack the aisles with Faith and Hope alone. This was perhaps an over-reaction to a situation where, in neighbouring churches and chapels, loyalty was bought with bags of coal and boots. Moreover, some unashamedly ticked-off a register at their church door of those who qualified for coal by attendance.

THE ADMIRAL COLLINGWOOD

In Fr. Sims' time extraordinary hyphenated people were regular visitors to the parish, and others still, with names like Mr. Torben de Bille and Miss Goodbody. At No. 5, Pier Head, a University Settlement was set up, presided over by Dr. Woulf Flanagan. A small boat, called the Admiral Collingwood, was moored there and the Wapping boys were not slow in making use of this new possibility for adventure. Though Shane Leslie, Carr-Saunders and R. G. Reynolds did much valuable work with the lads, the leading light was undoubt-

The League of the Cross - Ladies branch



edly Bertrand Ward-Devas. All these young men were called away to the Great War, and Ward-Devas never returned. A tablet by the Font records him, but the parish was so poor by the end of that war that it could hardly raise the money to inscribe the names of its other sons on the main plaque at the back of the Church, dedicated by Fr. Beckley in November, 1900.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY

Beyond doubt, the greatest event in the time of Father Sims was the arrival of the Sisters of Charity. They moved into the Convent at 13, Pier Head in November, 1915. Sister Vincent Agnes Cleary, who is still active in her great age, came with Sister Josephine and Sister Mary Unsworth. Sister Vincent, immediately began work in the girls school and, on the demise of Mr. Keenan, took over the Church Choir.

TEMPERANCE CLUB AND MANY CHARACTERS

In Father Mathew Hall, Lowder Street, the men of Wapping had formed quite a successful Club. Father Mathew, having been one of the great temperance preachers of the mid-19th century, it was strictly dry; though there were regular complaints to the landlord about the leaking roof. Over their darts snooker and mugs of tea, the Club Committee, who were also half the Stepney Borough Council, decided to mark the Centenary by organising a collection which would make the foundation sum for a new boys' school. The target they set was £260, which would be more than a thousand pounds in present day money. Top McCartney was appointed Secretary and J. Murphy the Treasurer and amongst the sixteen collectors, appeared the name Charles Fitz-Patrick. Many, many years later, dear old Charlie was to receive his gold medal from the Pope in that same building he helped to found.

Wapping, in spite of the depression and much unemployment, held a grand celebration and quickly found £17. 3s. more than the target they set. High Mass was sung to a setting by Byrd and 'Old Chuck', like a demented octopus on the Liverpool organ, sent the tiles rattling like a xylophone in accompaniment. After Mass, the cheque was handed on a salver to Cardinal Bourne, who then passed it to Fr. Sims. He in turn passed it to Father Joseph Reardon, since the Cardinal had also come to give him his marching orders to a larger parish. Both the Cardinal and Fr. Sims spoke proudly of that time, a hundred years previously, when Bishop Pynter had struck his bargain with the Masons

for the Red Lion Street Schools; and Father David Hickey, whose golden jubilee it was, spoke of events in 1871.

FATHER JOSEPH REARDON

After broken promises about homes for heroes; in the 1920's the government, through the London County Council, embarked on a plan to decant the people from deprived areas of London into satellite towns. Much good came of this idea. but it was also an occasion for high handed planners and social engineers to go to town, so to speak.

Father Joe, who too had slogged in the trenches of Flanders, spurred by the hope of a new world, was on one of his visits to County Hall, Westminster. Entering the office of one of the senior scribblers there, he explained who he was, and the purpose of his visit. The indiscreet official looked up and remarked, "Ah, Wapping. We've plans for that as an industrial zone. The People are to move to Becontree."

PROTEST MEETING

Now the Canon (Father Joe) had a formidable presence. He was very blind from cataracts in both eyes, and this was useful asset when he advanced into the oncoming enemy tanks. The poor clerk was roasted on the spot and the Canon stormed back to Wapping to call an emergency protest meeting in St. George's Town Hall. J.R. Oldfield, the County Councillor, Alderman Keefe and everyone of any note, were hauled before his most unholy inquisition. They were as unaware as he had been of Wapping's future and joined with him in a vigorous campaign to halt the diabolical plan.

"WHO WILL RID US OF THAT TURBULENT PRIEST"

As prime mover in the affair, the Canon had all his speeches printed and circulated throughout the Borough. From 1923-1935 he kept up a withering fusillade of protest and obstruction, the like of which few Local Authorities have had to sustain. Many a County official must, in that time, have echoed King Henry II's words about Becket: "Who will rid us of that turbulent Priest?".

But no-one did; and Wapping was reborn with new flats to replace the old back-toback cottages of Father Beckley's time. From the early 20's it had been the concealed policy of the L.C.C. to leave all sites empty after slum

clearance. But compulsory purchase laws were not strong in those days, and the Canon announced that unless flats were built on the sites, he would seek out the true owners and contest the L.C.C. rights of ownership. To this end, he delved into the past history of Wapping and found ancient sites of graveyards, rights of way and other snags to tie up the Council's lawyers. A distinguished former Wapping schoolboy remembers, with some pride, how he earned his first fee as a lawyer from the Canon, by probing into the legal past of just one of these sites.

STREET RE-NAMED

Eventually, like the shrewdest of property tychoons, the Canon did a deal with the Council to his advantage over the Red Lion Street and former Workhouse site. This made possible the erection of Willoughby and Vancouver Houses; and the long hoped for boys' school was now conveniently placed next to the Church and older school building. When, in later years, peace and amity blossomed between the Council and the Canon, the river end of Red Lion Street was re-named in his honour. And, to record his 'Battle of Worcester Street' with them, his old foes gave his respected name to Reardon House.

PHOENIX RESURGENS

The New Wapping, which rose, phoenix like, out of the ruins of the past, had a super abundance of children. This caused great over crowding in the old edifice, built by Fr. Beckley and opened by Cardinal Vaughan in June, 1896. As an expedient, the Canon used the Sacristy as an infants' class. He also had the novel and thoughtful notion of providing a warm, well lit room at the presbytery for boys who had won scholarships to grammar schools and had nowhere at home to study. The Canon never poked his nose in during homework time, other than to supply reference works, or ink.

THE NEW BOYS SCHOOL

When the fine new boys' school, designed by T.H.B. Scott, was opened by Cardinal Bourne in July, 1931, a stone from the original Virginia Street Chapel School was incorporated into the building. The stone was to remind the lads that they should strive to keep burnished the 130 year record of Catholic Edu-

cation near that spot. Like a new lode stone, it did its work well in guiding quite a few of the scholars of that time into high positions in present day public life.

SISTER VINCENT

Sister Vincent emerged from the cramped surroundings of the Sacristy as Headmistress of one of the most attractive, and most advanced designed, infant's schools of the year 1935. Again Scott was the talented architect, who made good use of a difficult and badly lit site. The formative influence of the next three generations of Catholic Wapping was the personality of Sister Vincent. On the outside wall of the school, the sculptor, Philip Lindsay Clark, carved the image of that great saint and teacher whose name she had adopted. Within the walls, his ideals of love and concern for the wellbeing of little children have reigned supreme ever since. But there is a special and more permanent niche than any sculptor could create for Sister Vincent; it's in the hearts and memories of all who taught, or skipped merrily in infancy through her school.

FATHER ANDREW REARDON

By contrast with his brother, the popular and vivacious Canon, Fr. Andrew had a quiet, scholarly and contemplative nature. When the occasion arose however, the Reardon stubborn determination and fire quickly came to the surface. The second world war broke out just a few years after Fr. Andrew came from Bow Common, and his big brother the Canon went to St. Patrick's Soho. In the fine summer of 1939 the parish broke up and dispersed in all directions. It was Hitler's declared intention to break the spirit of East London by merciless bombing and through their suffering cause the British Government to sue for peace on any terms.

MR. RIDGE

In an amazingly well organised move, all three schools went as a unit to Brighton. Mr. Ridge, the Headmaster of the boys school since 1922, was in overall charge. There, the children were billeted on the landladies of the bed and breakfast belt and the smart outer suburbs. In those early days of the war, few of these welcomed their obligatory and poorly paying guests. There was also heartbreak and fretting from the younger children on being separated

from their parents, though generally the mothers went with the schoolchildren. For the lonely, Miss Casey, Miss Hanley and the late Walter Dermot Farrell were there to give consolation and to act as substitute parents. In 1940, the school moved to the more friendly surroundings of Guildford, where it stopped almost till the end of the war.

CURATES DURING THE WAR YEARS

Fr. McVeigh, who came with Fr. Andrew, was called to the war, and in his place, to share the privations and equal risk of imminent death, came Fr. Francis Kenny. Wapping took a terrible hammering from the first air raids in 1940. The inflammable contents of its wharves made it a potential fire-bomb in itself. But the enemy plan to create a fire wind out of the intense heat, which would sweep through the whole capital, was never realised, thanks to our air defence.

BOMBING OF ST. JOHN'S

Almost the first building to go was St. John's Church, with its tower acting like a chimney to the blazing nave. The blast from the explosion shattered all the windows of St. Patrick's and shifted the whole structure on its foundations. A few months later, incendiary bombs fell on the Church roof and burned their way to the wooden ceiling in the right aisle. The prompt observation of an Air Raid Warden on the roof of a nearby wharf brought the fire brigade just in time to save the Church from the fate of its neighbour, St John.

PADDLING TO THE ALTAR

Fr. Andrew and Fr. Kenny spent that night of September 11th in the shelter of St. George's Hospital, where they were on permanent sick call to the inform and the casualties. They returned in the morning to find the Church flooded. The fire brigade had had little time and with the Thames on hand, Wapping never lacked for water. Unperturbed, Fr. Andrew vested for Mass, took his chalice and waded through to the Altar; where every day, with two tiny stubs of candle to light the gloom, he prayed for the deliverance of his parish.

SHELTER IN SCHOOL AND VAULTS

The old school building became a rest centre for families bombed out of their homes. The ground floor windows were bricked up and sand bag defences were built around. Inside, great beams shored up the roof and families slept with their few belongings around them in rows of iron bunk beds. Most, who for some reason had to remain in Wapping, slept in the cavenous damp vaults of the wharves. Fr. Andrew made his nightly round of these, usually ammounting his presence by a bang on the stone steps with his walking stick and a gruff 'Hello dears!'

ALMONDS GALORE

One morning, a high explosive blew a lighter full of almonds almost into Wapping High Street. Little boys with big pockets appeared as fast as news can spread. The police were there in force to drive the lads away, since they feared contamination with phosphorus from the bomb. Despite threats and constant chasing, it was a hopeless task, till one had the bright idea to knock on Fr. Andrews door. Along he came, tapping his stick. The shame of being caught stealing by Fr. Andrew left not a boy in sight. They fled, some emptying their pockets.

SHABBY BOMB-SCARRED WAPPING

The post war years suffered from a general lack of manpower, money and materials, especially paint. Shabby, bomb scarred Wapping was no exception. Hardly a vehicle passed round 'The Lane.' Housewives needlessly clutched ration books and the hands of children dressed in pre-war clothes. They bought Uncle Sam's powdered egg and milk by the hundredweight, while in the countryside, of recent happy memory, farmers were forced in desperation to sell their fresh food to 'Spivs' and black marketeers.

CHARLIE FITZPATRICK

Inside the cracked walls of St. Patrick's, moss and blue fungus scoured the plaster from the walls. Generations of sparrows nested in the High Altar, chirping back as Sister Vincent played the squeeking harmonium. A sub-aqueous glimmer came through the few remaining pale green window panes,

helped out by half a dozen electric light bulbs strung up temporarily to the columns. Charlie FitzPatrick, the Sacristan, groped around scraping up candle grease to make new candles.

Though with a much reduced congregation, the Feasts were held with ceremony and devoutness. Charlie would be up before dawn to fetch flowers for the Altar from Covent Garden, where such things were an early and un-necessary, off-ration, luxury. As ever, Procession Day brought back the crowds of former parishioners, now settled in distant parts.

Shortly after the death of the Canon, in 1952 at Soho, his brother Fr. Andrew became infirm with high blood pressure. Fr. Kenney took virtual control of the parish, and cashing in on the football pool craze, he started a little informal committee which met, each Saturday night, in the upstairs club room of the Presbytery, to work out the results and to chat about parish affairs. Sister Twomey from the Hospital, Bill Hunter, Tom Worsfold and Jim Doran did stirring work and young George Worley would hare-off on his bike in the rain to Hanshaw the printers, after each meeting.

With the revenue, Fr. Kenney set about re-vitalising to parish and renovating the Church and schoolbuildings. The schools had been dealt a body blow by the 1944 Education Act, which made necessary re-organization of Catholic education on area rather than local lines, to save cost. The new boys' school, built at so much sacrifice by the parish, had to be abandoned when the boys and girls of secondary age went to St. Bernards, and other schools outside the parish. When Mr. Ridge retired after 30 years of headship, in 1952, it really was the end of a great era. Within a few days of receiving a Cross 'pro Ecclesia et Pontifice' to the applause and delight of all his former pupils, he died.

The funeral of Fr. Andrew was yet another mournful and solemn turning point in those years. His black velvet draped catafalque surmounted by his worn old berretta rested below a maze of scaffolding in the Church, which was having its first complete renovation since his brother's time. When Fr. Kenney was moved from the parish, there was a general feeling of regret, which could only be compared historically to the departure in the mid st of his work of Fr. Angelo.



Canon Joseph Reardon and Sister Vincent

PRESENT DAY WAPPING

FATHER SAMUEL STEER

In 1956 Father Steer was appointed to replace Father Reardon. That was the year of the rising in Hungary, and in November hundreds of refugees were brought to be housed in the disused St. George's Hospital buildings. Father Steer and his parishioners were indefatigable in their efforts to assist the strangers in every possible way.

REORGANISATION OF THE SCHOOLS

A major event in our parish history that occurred during Father Steer's sojourn was the reorganisation of the schools. The Senior boys and girls were transferred to the Bishop Challoner Boys and Girls schools in Commercial Road Parish, and on April 22nd 1958, the Junior boys and girls amalgamated to form St Patrick's Primary school.

It was decided to use the ground floor of the former Boy's School in Dendee St. for a School Meal's Centre - and in 1961 the present kitchen and dining hall were ready for use. The change from Farthingfields was very acceptable.

CENTRAL HEATING

Another benefit to the school that came in 1961 was the installation of central heating. Previous to that there were huge fires in each classroom; their up-keep entailed a great deal of hard work and inconvenience, especially to the schoolkeeper.

This was the second gift of heating that came to St. Patrick's through Father Steer. Early in his stay, he decided to satisfy what was a crying need in the church, namely some form of central heating. Those who had endured the unheated mornings in Greenbank were most appreciative.

After years of exceptional devotedness at Community and personal level, Father Steer was moved to Royston, and Father Lowe came to Wapping from Wembley Park.

FATHER LOWE - ECUMENICAL ACTIVITIES

Father Charles Lowe came to St Patrick's at a time when the emphasis was on unity between churches. He entered wholeheartedly into the spirit of the Church in this matter. It is thanks to his efforts in conjunction with Father Foizey of St Peter's that there is a happy relationship between the congregations of the two churches. The Outdoor Stations of the Cross in Holy Week and Carol Services are among the joint services that came into being early in Father Lowe's time in Wapping.

YOUNG AND OLD

In his concern for the young, Father Lowe opened a club for them in part of the former Boys School. In time he started a branch of the Young Christian Workers and took a personal interest in their meeting and activities, as also in the Legion of Mary, another of his works. With the help of Sister Apolline, he started the Union of Catholic Mothers and one of their many charitable activities was a club for Senior Citizens.

SOCIAL CLUB

A great monument to his memory is, of course, the Social Club. It started in a small way with a tea bar presented by the P.L.A., in the Boy's School. In almost a completely transformed building, it was officially opened by Cardinal Heenan, to provide a centre for the social life of the whole neighbourhood. Now it has more than six hundred members, who though of differing religious persuasions, are united in a true spirit of Christian Charity.

It would be impossible to give an account of all the personalities and activities surrounding the life of the Social Club in the summary of history, which is all this book sets out to be.

Father Lowe was transferred to Northfields and Father O'Neill appointed Parish Priest in November 1968.

REVIVAL OF THE BAND

1970 saw the revival of the great tradition of St Patrick's Band. Though the average age of the bandsmen is between twelve and sixteen, there is every promise that they will be worthy of that great tradition begun by Father Beckley, almost a century ago.

To these lads of the next generation and to all who follow them in devotion to Saint Patrick and to Wapping, we dedicate this short chronicle.

With thanks for the past
For the future we pray.



