

HISTORY

OF THE

Mission of the Society of Jesus

IN

WIGAN.

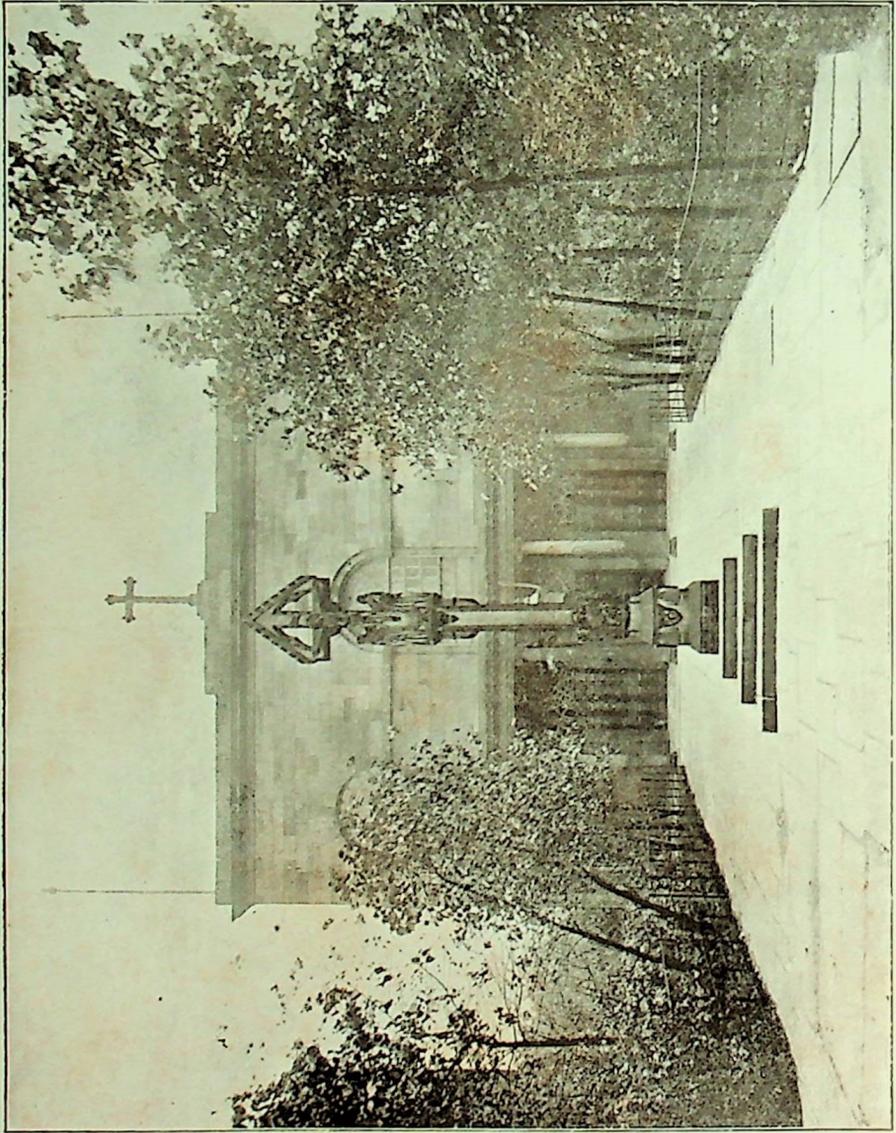
COMPILED

BY THE REV. J. G. MACLEOD, S.J.

ST. JOHN'S PRESBYTERY.

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MANRESA PRESS, ROEHAMPTON.

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CONSIDERABLE doubt is thrown on the origin and meaning of the name Wigan by the variety of forms given to it in the old records. Leland and Fuller simply call the town Wiggin, while in ancient charters the name is spelt Wyggan, as though derived from the word *Wye*, meaning a place of safety, the town having been during the middle ages a place of safety for runaway slaves. Again, Wigan being the plural form of the Saxon word *Wig*—a fight, may refer to the frequent battles which according to Nennius took place in this neighbourhood. Camden, on the other hand, gives *Wi-biggin* as the original name of the town, which indicates a group of small buildings, such as might have been gradually formed round the junction of three Roman roads which marked the spot. Wigan was an important Roman station, and has ever since possessed much historical and local interest; it also formed one of the oldest missions of the Society of Jesus.

Prior to any connected history that we have of this mission, we find evidence of its existence in short biographical notices of individual Fathers who were appointed to serve in it; and a letter from the Protestant Bishop of Chester to the Privy Council in 1583, testifies to the staunchness of the faithful of Wigan as being "stubborn and contemptuous recusants," or in other words, firm and consistent Catholics. The importance of the position of the Society of Jesus in the town, both as a missioners and as instructors of youth, may be gathered from the fact that in the time of James II. it had a large school or college, accommodated originally in a spacious

mansion outside the town and bought for the purpose, attended by more than a hundred scholars, and that Bishop Leyburn confirmed on the 14th and 15th of September, in the year 1687, 1,331 persons. As the chapel, attached to the school, was at first but small, it used to be densely crowded, and yet we read that the Mayor and his Councillors frequently assisted at the services. Just before the breaking out of the Revolution in 1688, materials for building a new church and college were prepared, nay, its erection had been begun, the site for the boarders' quarters having been marked out, when the excited mob tore up and destroyed the foundations.

The history of this Catholic College has, ever since those days, left its mark on an extensive neighbourhood alongside of the River Douglas, and has given its name of Scholes, or Schools, not only to the whole district round where it stood, but also in a variety of forms to its hill, fields, lanes, and streets.<sup>1</sup> The situation naturally lent itself for an educational establishment, and may have been already so employed; in truth, the existence of a school in this district, as far back as 1625, was indicated in the Annual Letters of the Society. Local records describe the buildings which existed here in 1687; while the alterations and excavations made in School Lane a very few years ago, brought into view the old demolished walls and rough ground-plan, to which access was gained through the former College gateway by an entry in the main street of Scholes, which is still called, *Down ith' gates*. The Society of Jesus, till very lately, retained part of this property, and as the present Church of St. John's stands within a stone's throw from the old College on ground devised to the Society, it is probable that both stood on what was called the "Standish Gate property."

On the ecclesiastical side of its history, St. John's parish possesses the famous Mab's Cross, well known to and held in respect even by Protestants, who when attending a funeral used to, and perhaps do still, take off their hats in reverence for that great act of repentance and self-humiliation which the carefully-protected fragment of

<sup>1</sup> The mission of Scholes, near Prescot, received its name from a like cause.

the cross still records. Sir William Bradshaigh, of Haigh Hall, having in the time of Edward III. been absent from home for nearly ten years, as a Crusader to the Holy Land, his wife, Lady Mabel, receiving no tidings of him, married Sir Osmund Neville, a Welsh knight. On the return, however, of Sir William, his wife, struck by the deepest penitence for her rash act and being held justly to blame, was condemned for life to the severe penance of walking barefoot once a week from the chapel in Haigh Hall to a cross placed on the top of the hill leading from Standish into the town, and still called *Mab's Cross*—a distance of more than two miles. Husband and wife were fully reconciled before death, and their bodies lie side by side in the old parish church. Still more prized, however, is the venerable Church itself, so truly Catholic in its foundation and in its history for centuries, carrying us back, as it does, to the time when all Wigan was one in faith. It tells us of the ancient family of the Bradshaighs, which contributed members to the Society of Jesus in the persons of Father Peter Bradshaigh, twice Rector of the Lancashire District; and Father Richard, missionary in the county, Rector of the Colleges of Liege and St. Omers, and Provincial for four years; of Father Robert, sent into exile for his religion, and of Father Thomas, a worthy brother of the two last named, Minister, Procurator, and Consultor in Rome. Its mortuary chapels and vaults contain the bodies of Lindsays and Catholic Walmesleys, whilst its restored architecture is intimately connected with the return to the faith of the Hon. Colin Lindsay, a devout and learned scholar, who was in his Protestant days churchwarden of the parish. The family of the Walmesleys of Westwood gave a member to the Society, Father Christopher, who joined in 1708, and became Prefect of Studies, and Professor of Philosophy and Theology at Liege. To the same family belonged the late Father Henry Walmesley, who for a time was in charge of the Wigan mission, while his nephew, Father Herman, was Rector of Stonyhurst, and is now Superior in South Africa. The Right Rev. Charles Walmesley, Vicar-Apostolic of the Western District in the latter half

of the eighteenth century, was another member of the family.

As the lie and length of a road are marked by the succession of milestones, so may the history of a parish be traced out by its registers, and by the names of its successive pastors. The first Baptism entered on St. John's books takes us back to March 16th, 1740, when Father Brockholes was missionary. His registers were, however, very imperfectly kept, as Father Marmaduke Langdale states when he copied them in 1780. It is curious to note in these entries that the word "Christened" did not give place to "Baptized" till 1777; and also that the names of the fathers and mothers were not at first entered, but only those of the godfathers and godmothers. Father Charles Brockholes has generally been considered the father and founder of the mission of St. John's, although Father James Canell, the missionary at Wigan in James II.'s time, possesses some claim to the title, for he was the fixed and salaried priest in charge, probably from 1682 until 1722, when he died in Wigan, on the 27th March, aged 73, having joined the Society in 1671. His name occurs in a document signed by Miss Clare Gerard, dated April 3rd, 1696, by which she directed the four executors named in her will, William Gerard of Garswood, John Gillebrand of Chorley, Richard Worthington, and Thomas Worthington of Wigan, to pay the interest of a small legacy towards the maintenance of a priest in and about Wigan; "and that after his decease it shall go to the Jesuit that shall come to help the poor in and about Wigan, but for want of such help of the Jesuits, then for the priest that shall help as aforesaid, be he of what Order it pleaseth God he hapneth to be onc." Father Canell is the first resident missionary that can be named, and probably lived in or near Wigan when the College was destroyed. In the *status* for 1701 his annual income is given as amounting to £20 drawn from the College District funds, £10 subscribed by the people, and certain other small sums, making it not much above £31 in all. Father Thomas Kirk was, it seems, his coadjutor from about 1710 to 1716, two small volumes of those dates

bearing his signature as resident in Wigan. He had entered the Noviceship in 1689, and died in 1718.

Before the Fathers of the Society found themselves settled at Wigan with any prospect of obtaining a peaceful and permanent footing in the town, they must have had to endure constant hardships and persecution; this is sufficiently indicated in the Society's private records of the Lancashire Mission and of individual Fathers. Thus a definite tradition exists that they had at one time a small chapel and house attached, situated at the immediate corner of Chapel Lane, a very likely position from its contiguity to Scholes Bridge, where there formerly was a ford, and just beyond which was, or had been, the Jesuit College. It is said that on the appearance of a second priest, probably a mere visitor, the people were at once so enraged that they gathered round the house, attacked it furiously and began pulling it down, and so the Fathers had to make their escape half-dressed to the dwelling of a Catholic at Rockferry, in the direction of Ince. Another tradition assigns to the Society's missionaries, as a temporary resting-place, some old tenements down one of the yards in Duke Street, and adjoining Lord Street, which belonged to the Walmesley family. The existence of a stone building and arched entrance in Lord Street somewhat favours this tradition.

Father Canell's successor was Father Edmund Smith, whose letters bore the address, "Mr. E. Smith, to be left at Apothecary Gerard's in Wigan." He died in 1727, at the age of 61. Father Richard Smith, the Rector in 1725, seems to have held a tight hand over Father Edmund's expenses, for he allowed only £20 a year for his "diet, washing, fire, candle, and attendance, and no more for these sort of necessaries. Item for his clothes and pocket-money £6 a year, besides forty shillings a year as interest during his life for £40 he gave up in Mr. Billing's time, which as the forsaied are to be payed half-yearly." Father Smith was likewise required to pay his apothecary's and doctor's bills out of the above allowance and any charitable gifts and mortuary perquisites he might receive. The Rev. Sir Piers Mostyn, of Talacre, was probably the

next missionary, and came in 1727; after which time his address was, "At his house in Wigan." He was too deeply imbued with the spirit of the Society to take up his title publicly, and here he probably died in 1735.

Father Charles Brockholes, whose name was the first to be connected with the mission of St. John's under that title, entered the Society about 1704. He was in the first instance placed at Black Rod, in succession to Father Turbervil, as chaplain there of the Andertons of Lostock, but he removed from that place to Wigan in 1740. As he had previously served Wigan from Black Rod, so he now reversed the order. One would fain derive the name Black Rod from *Black rood*, and thus give it an ecclesiastical origin, but the ancient form of the word was simply Black Road, suggesting no higher connection than the discovery of the treasure of coal that lay beneath the surface of the district. The place itself is said to have been an ancient Roman station, the *Coccium* of Antoninus and *Ridogunum* of Ptolemy.<sup>1</sup> The neighbourhood was under the care of the Society from an early date. Father Brockholes, on moving into Wigan, took up his residence in Standishgate, where he built a house almost entirely at his own expense, and arranged the upper part of it as a chapel, in order to guard the Catholics worshipping in it from molestation. It is supposed that this house still exists as a well-known fish-shop, standing between Dicconson Street and Powell Street, just behind the Dicconson Arms, in old times the town residence of the Catholic family of Wrightington Hall. The house possesses a large wainscoted room, still in a good state of preservation, in which a door immediately over the fire-place admits into a recess of some size. At the time we speak of, the congregation (under the title of "customers") numbered 300.

On the death of Father Brockholes in 1759, Father John Worthington took his place, and served the mission for many years, dying at Wigan in 1777, when 64 years of age. Father Marmaduke Langdale, his successor in the mission, was sent thither soon after his ordination at

<sup>1</sup> This distinction has been claimed both for Ribchester and Wigan.

Cologne in 1776, having been Master at the Little College, Bruges, at the time of the Suppression. In 1785 he erected the old Chapel of St. John's, fronting the street, and having its altar close to the spot on which stands the present Walmesley Cross. At the same time he built a house also fronting the street, and divided from the chapel by a short narrow passage leading to a side entrance into it. When the priests subsequently left this house, it was occupied by a Mrs. Moneyppenny, until taken into use by the Sisters of Notre Dame, and afterwards removed to make room for their present large convent. The mission is said to have greatly flourished under Father Langdale's care, although he died in November, 1784, at an early age, greatly lamented by his flock. Father Richard Barrow, then at Pontefract, was sent to succeed him, after already labouring for eighteen years in his former charge. But he was spared to work for thirteen years more, as he died in 1799, at the age of 61, and was buried in the Windleshaw Cemetery, near St. Helens. This spot, formerly belonging to the Gerards of Garswood, is made especially interesting to the Province by the interment within its precincts of so many of our Fathers. It has formed indeed for many years the burial-ground for the Catholics of St. Helens, Portico, Ashton, Blackbrook, and Birchley. In 1835, Sir John Gerard gave a piece of land adjoining it to enlarge its precincts. In one portion of it lie ancient remains of a mortuary chapel or religious house, which according to tradition mark the site of some priory, whence it is often called Windleshaw Abbey or Priory. It is brought into nearer relations with Wigan by the supposition that it was dependent on an abbey in the township of Up Holland. The parish owes to Father Barrow an especial acknowledgment of the perfect order, neatness, and legibility of hand, in which he wrote out and preserved the parish registers. After his death the historian mourns pathetically over the bad writing of his successor, Father Herman Kemper, a native of Westphalia. This latter, however, made up by cultivating his mission so sedulously that the help of another priest was needed to attend to its ever-

increasing members, before he left for New Hall in 1808. He was in fact one of the ablest scholars and most valuable members of our Province, the Colleges of Liege and Stonyhurst testifying to his merits as a Master, Prefect of Studies, and Professor of Divinity.

The Wigan mission was next served by three brothers of the name of Tate, in succession. The first of these, John Tate, though educated at Stonyhurst, was simply attached to the Society as a secular priest. He was sent in 1805 to assist Father Kemper, and continued there till he was transferred to Lydiate in 1821. After him came his brother, Father Joseph, who began work in Wigan in 1808 as a secular priest, but was admitted into the Society in 1810, leaving it shortly afterwards. He served different S.J. missions in Preston, Wigan, Stonyhurst, and Bristol, and was re-admitted into the Noviceship in 1823, at the age of 52. After edifying all by his fervour and docility, he became a professed Father in 1835. He opened the present church at Bury St. Edmund's, and died subsequently at Stonyhurst in 1842. The third brother, Father Thomas Tate, belonged wholly to St. John's, Wigan, beginning his life's work there in 1811, and completing it at his death there on March 29, 1819. Being universally esteemed and beloved for his frank and obliging disposition, his kind and devoted attention to the poor and the sick was worthily crowned by a martyrdom of charity, for his death was caused by an attack of typhus caught at the bedside of a penitent. He was buried in a vault built under the spot where now stands the confessional in the modern St. John's that abuts on the new priest's house. The *Preston Chronicle* of 3rd April, 1819, eulogizes his great zeal in the discharge of his pastoral duties, and his readiness to sacrifice his life for the good of his flock.

As the year 1819 introduces us to a new era in the history of St. John's parish, and the erection of its present handsome church, it will be found very interesting to trace by the help of its registers the development of the Catholic population during the time when the old chapel was in use. In the year 1766, 33 baptisms had been entered, but no marriages; in 1791, the baptisms had increased to 92,

the marriages numbering 19. The year 1816 recorded 192 baptisms and 18 marriages; whereas the new St. John's registered in 1841, 254 baptisms and 28 marriages; and again in 1866, 275 baptisms and 38 marriages. This, it must be observed, was coincident with the existence of a secular chapel in Wigan since 1818, and of an additional secular chapel since 1841. The bench-rent book also tells its tale: in 1786 there were 114 bench-holders, Lancashire men all, sound and true. From 1786 to 1818, the bench book is perfect; more so, we are afraid, than the punctuality of the payments, for it tells of defaulters, that some "cannot pay," and that others, alas! "will not pay."

In 1819, St. John's possessed three missionaries, and a congregation increased from its original "300 customers" to the more imposing number of 3,000. Both before and after this date the Church in Lancashire began gradually to venture upon more public and independent action, and this we learn from the fact that on the 15th of October, 1824, a general meeting of the Catholics of Wigan and its vicinity was held at the School-room in Rodney Street, Roger Anderton, of Birket Bank, being in the chair. The purpose of this meeting was to found a Wigan Catholic Association, which should agitate, in every loyal and constitutional way, for the repeal of the laws then militating against full liberty of religious worship. Besides its excellent object, the report of the proceedings of the meeting is doubly interesting as defining the boundary line of the Wigan district to have at that time extended to Orrell Mount, Standish, Wrightington, Euxton, Weldbank, Hindley, Bedford (Leigh), Ashton in the Willows, St. Helens, Garswood, Croxton, Brin, Blackbrook, and Birchley Hall. The influence also of the Society in attracting the co-operation of men of mark and standing round about gives clear indication of the esteem in which they held it. Such names occur as those of the secular clergy of all the missions in the neighbourhood, followed by Sir William Gerard, New Hall, Charles Walmesley, Charles Standish, Charles Dicconson, William Anderton, Thomas Gillibrand, and Roger Anderton. The titles of their country residences are too well known to require

any mention here. The same list reminds us of such familiar names as Thicknesse, Fairclough, Greenough, Middlehurst, Aspinall, Coupe, Dawber, Duchworth, Leadbetter, Tasker, Unsworth, Topping, and many others.

The year 1819 witnessed the erection of the present Parish Church. In 1817 the great increase of the congregation had convinced the leading Catholics of the town that a new and more spacious church ought to be built, and a large meeting was held on the 11th Nov., in which a resolution, signed by 1,400 persons, was passed, that steps should immediately be taken to obtain the necessary funds for its erection. Notwithstanding the peculiar difficulties which then presented themselves, the work was successfully carried through. The foundation-stone was laid on January 27, 1818, and the church was opened on the 24th of June in the following year. It stands upon a plot of land lying behind the old chapel built in 1785. Subsequently to the building of the new church, the old chapel was pulled down, and the two houses facing each other on either side of the entrance to the chapel-yard were erected on its site. That on the left when approaching the present church was at first occupied by the priests, but they afterwards removed to the other house when the nuns took possession of the one which had been vacated.

A somewhat brief account of St. John's new church written at the time, describes it as a well-proportioned building, with a severely plain exterior, basilica in shape. The plan and decoration of the interior were more ornate and elaborate, and were modelled on the Greek type of architecture, having a wide-spread panelled roof, unsupported by pillars, and a deep and richly moulded cornice carried round to sustain it. The high altar was placed within a wide recess immediately in front of a dome or canopy, of very elegant design, which served as a reredos, and it was flanked on either side by three massive columns resting on heavy pedestals. The proportions of the church are about 120 feet in length, by 50 in breadth, and close on 50 feet in height. By the help of the organ gallery the building can accommodate fully 1,000 persons, with sittings

for about 800. The cost of the structure was about £9,000—a sum provided chiefly by the Province and its members. It seems that no definite statement has been preserved as to the name of the architect of the church or the sources whence its design was taken. A rather vague tradition points towards the Fathers of the Society themselves as its originators, guided by their researches abroad and in Rome, and employing clever workmen taken from the neighbourhood to carry out their plans. It is part of the same tradition that the exceedingly graceful and perfectly proportioned details of the interior ornamentation were copied from the designs of Andrea Pozzo, a Jesuit lay-brother, and a famous architect and decorator, who was born at Trent in 1642, and died at Vienna in 1709. The beauty of his work may be tested by the fine ceiling of the Church of S. Ignazio in Rome.

The earliest decoration of the original church that we read of, was carried out by the late Mr. Scoles, the architect, in the year 1834, at the request of Father Haggerty, then in charge. He evidently bestowed great care upon his work, as may be gathered from the following letter written to explain some delay in its execution. "I have been some time," he says, "in completing the sketches for the high altar, in consequence of meeting with some beautiful ornaments, formerly in front of an altar from the Continent. I delayed the drawing till I could get them in my possession to draw from."

In the year 1849, during the administration of Father Mann, the interior of St. John's was again painted and decorated, this time by Mr. Bulmer, at a cost of £400. These improvements included the addition of the pilasters which are carried along the sides of the church, and break the monotony of their flat surface. The four windows nearest the sanctuary were also filled in with stained glass, representing as their subjects, the Good Shepherd, the Blessed Virgin with the Divine Child, St. Joseph, and St. John the Evangelist, Patron of the church and parish. These windows were presented by Father Henry Walmesley, of Westwood; and a memorial brass in the church records the fact and date, and begs the

prayers of the congregation for the pious donor. The window immediately behind the high altar was bricked up by Mr. Bulmer, in order to give effect to the decorations. Subsequently, during the same Father's time, in the year 1874, the whole church, and more particularly the altar end, was richly and solidly coloured, though with designs more effective in themselves than in perfect keeping with the character of the architecture. It is greatly to the praise of the excellence of Mr. Park's work within the sanctuary, that it has in great measure preserved to the present day the depth and brightness of its colouring. It was in the course of these decorations that the window behind the high altar was re-opened and filled with stained glass of a brilliantly coloured Byzantine pattern.

In 1885, under Father Gradwell's direction, the other portions of the building were thoroughly repaired and re-decorated; the church was for the first time paved with tiles; new benches were introduced, the construction of which was entrusted to Mr. Michael Hague, and new standard gases were so placed as to light up brilliantly the whole interior. Intimately associated with his retirement from charge of the parish through ill-health, after filling the post for an unusually long period, was the erection by Father Vincent Bond who succeeded him, of the exceedingly chaste and handsome altar-rails. These deserve to be highly valued both for the generosity with which this tribute was, in memory of Father Gradwell, presented to the church, and for the costliness of the material and workmanship employed. Mr. Charles Hadfield, of Sheffield, was the architect selected, and after his designs and under his direction the sanctuary was at the same time enlarged and rearranged. The marble-work was executed by Messrs. J. and H. Patteson, of Manchester; and Mr. Preston, of Wigan, carried out the new flooring and alterations. The rails, of bold design, are straight in front, but curved at the sides, and are upwards of fifty-two feet in length. Their appearance is richly decorative. The balustraded portion is composed of finely selected light alabaster relieved by panelled pilasters, inlaid with spotted Serravezza marble. The base and broad capping are formed of richly-coloured

Griotte marble, while the step on which they stand is bluish-grey dove marble. The pedestals of the large engaged columns near the altar have also been panelled and cased with marbles. The flooring and new arrangement of steps have been laid with narrow herring-bone pitch-pine boards, partially carpeted.

Besides the smaller brass put up close to the sacristy door in memory of Henry Walmesley the church has acquired very recently two handsome memorial brasses, which are attached to the wall on either side of the chief entrance door. As such inscriptions are generally read with difficulty, we give the words of each in full.

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Pray for the soul of the Hon. Colin Lindsay, of Deer Park, in the parish of Buckerell, in the county of Devon, 4th son of James 24th Earl of Crawford and 7th Earl of Balcarres, who departed this life on the 28th day of Jany., A.D. 1892, aged 72, and for the soul of his wife, the Lady Frances of Deer Park aforesaid, daughter and co-heir of William Forward Howard, 4th Earl of Wicklow, K.P., who departed this life, 20th of August, A.D. 1897, aged 76, on whose souls may God have mercy. Amen.

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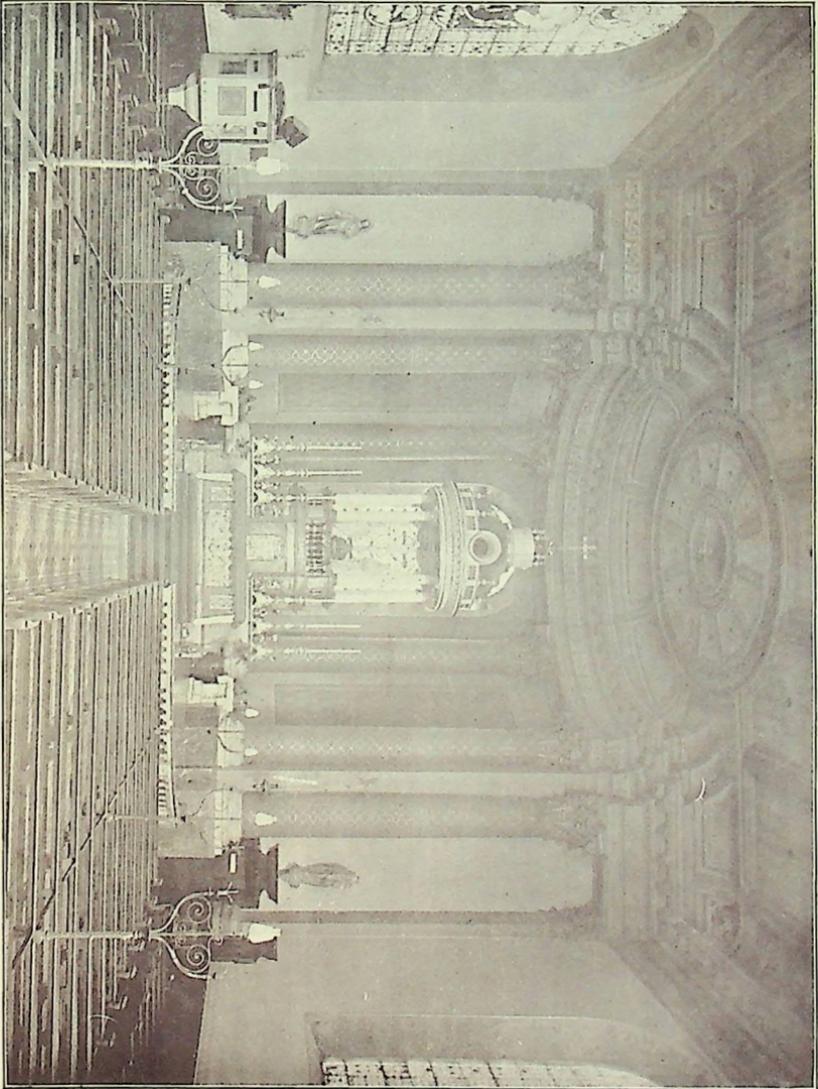
Of your charity pray for the souls of Herman Kemper Walmesley, of Gidlow, Wigan, who died 17th Dec., 1890, aged 74, and of Ellen, his wife, who died 6th Nov., 1851, aged 36 years, fortified by the rites of the Church. In affectionate remembrance of whom this tablet is erected by their loving children.

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The results obtained by the different improvements of which we have given the history will be best seen by a more detailed description of the interior of the church as it now presents itself to the eye. The object which at once and most fittingly arrests the attention on entering is the exceedingly chaste and perfectly proportioned canopy, enshrining the Tabernacle, the character of which is probably unique in this country, the actual adjustment of its several parts having been pronounced by an experienced architect, after close inspection, to be the result of the most careful

study and the most exact and detailed measurements. The lower part of this structure forms a large round drum, enclosing the tabernacle. This has now assumed a rich, deep, rose colour, lightened by green panels, all highly polished, and well relieved by very handsome brass tabernacle-gates, the finely executed work of Mr. Hardman, as also by the very effective metal frontal to the altar, which appears to be of foreign workmanship. Above this solid foundation rises the dome, of which the prevailing decoration is white and gold work. It commences with a handsome gilt balustrade passing round it and intersected, at different points, by the black marble basis on which its slender, pure white pillars rest. These support the domed roof of the canopy, and with their gilt Corinthian capitals of delicate workmanship, form the chief beauty of the whole construction. The cupola is itself of original and effective design, being formed of a second gilt balustrade in due proportion, and surmounted by a pierced corona or lantern, bearing up a cross at the highest apex. The interior of the dome is divided into slightly tinted panels containing a religious emblem in light gold, and a pure but brilliant effect is produced when the jets within it are lit up, and the six tall candles, that in their magnificent gilt candlesticks reach to a good height on either side from the broad base of the altar below. The effect of this canopy has been of late years very much enhanced by the extension, at each end, of the step which raises the back of the high altar, and is finished off by a massive and elegant console or half pillar. The canopy itself gains fresh dignity as it rises upward from this widened basis nearly to the roof of the sanctuary, like a beautiful Renaissance temple; its exact position, slightly in front of the apse or recess of the sanctuary, emphasizes the symbolism of the silver dove sculptured on the roof, which spreads its wings immediately above the spot on which the priest stands when celebrating the Divine Mysteries. The dome enshrines within its pillars a large crucifix, with figures of the Blessed Virgin and St. John supporting it on each side.

There are other points connected with the interior



structure and decorations of this church to which we may here draw attention, and which might very easily be overlooked. The pattern and curve of the new marble altars were carefully designed, in order to harmonize in perfect symmetry and proportion with those marking the balustraded front of the organ-gallery, itself unique in the graceful sweep which carries it across the church, and, instead of being simply let into the wall at a right angle, like most galleries, smoothes its corners outward until their line merges in with that of the wall at either side, to which it clings, and of which it seems to form a part. The balustraded front of this gallery is in its turn exactly proportioned to the balustrade-work carried round the dome, and repeated in the corona, or lantern, that covers the whole. The ceiling of the church also painted in compartments, presents to the eye a very wide surface wholly unsupported by pillars, enriched and relieved, at the same time, by an unusually deep and massive cornice of very fine workmanship. The porch of St. John's, and the well-proportioned pillars supporting it, deserve more than a passing glance, as, singularly unpretentious in themselves, they stand out in front of a very plain and insignificant exterior, which ill prepares one for the beautiful and ornate interior we have been describing.

Having carried down to the present day our history of the different changes and improvements which have made the interior of the Church of St. John's so rich and handsome in comparison with its simply plain and neat appearance when first opened in 1819, we must go back to take up the tale of the missionaries and the work done by them outside of the church itself. From this date the changes amongst them become too numerous to admit of much individual mention. The first whom we name, Father William Cotham, uncle and namesake of the Father Cotham known to many of us, was a man of eminence in the Society, holding many offices and appointed first Superior of the Mission of Jamaica, in which he died. As missionary for a time in Wigan, he brought our Fathers into connection with the outlying district of Up Holland, acting as chaplain at Orrell Mount

in 1820 to the community of Benedictine nuns, who afterwards removed to Princethorpe. These Religious were for the most part French, and chose this scarcely congenial locality in order to be near Standish Hall, some of them being related to Mr. Charles Standish, who had married a French lady; and to whom belongs the distinction of having been for a brief space in 1837, the first and only Catholic Member for Wigan. They were in close proximity to Up Holland, a village only four miles from Wigan, and gathered round the ruins of an ancient Priory of Benedictines. Some young persons attended their school from Wigan, and there was a good deal of communication between the two places. It is from Up Holland that the illustrious family of Holland derived its name. Dugdale states that the original foundation of the small town was a College or Chantry of secular priests, who at the petition of Sir Robert de Holland, were changed into a community of monks. Still nearer Wigan, and in the same direction, stood Hayfield, or Highfield, at one time a seat of the Gerard family, served by Fathers of the Society. Amongst the missionaries there Father Richard Moore finds mention in 1701; also Father Bennett died at Highfield in 1761. Wigan Fathers used likewise to say Mass occasionally at Mr. Gerard's house.

St. John's owes to Father Haggerty a very grateful acknowledgment of the excellent work which he achieved both in the church and in the district. Although labouring in Wigan for only seven years, he won in an extraordinary degree the love of his congregation, of the surrounding priests, and of the people of the town. He died in 1834 of typhus fever, the first of five Fathers who in succession succumbed to the same disease. It is suspected that the cause of this lies to our hand. In the May of 1831, an additional plot of ground had been purchased and was at once used as a churchyard for the Catholic population, bodies being buried close up against the walls of the priest's house, and as was afterwards discovered very near to the surface. The "Health of Towns' Act" fortunately removed this evil, and arrested the succession of deaths attributed to such

a cause. Father William Ibbotson died during his tertian-ship at the Seminary, in 1834; Father James Catanach, in 1837, fell a victim of charity in attending the sick of typhus fever. Father Francis Hearn was attacked by typhus at Wigan, and died at Hodder, on April 29, 1847; while Father Robert Johnson closed the list, being attacked with typhus and dying in 1847, at Southhill, to which place he had been removed. In the same year, Father James Walker very nearly died of the like complaint, but rallied after being anointed.

Father Thomas Seed, afterwards Provincial, was sent in 1851 to take charge of St. John's mission, and remained there till 1859, when he left, to the great regret of his flock, who presented to him a public testimonial of their esteem. He was succeeded by Father Hill, who was obliged to leave in 1867, through ill-health, but was soon after appointed Rector of Mount St. Mary's College.

From the year 1819, St. John's missionaries were three in number, and under their care the congregation had advanced from 300 to 3,000; in 1858 the increase reached 6,000. By the year 1872, the list of confessions rose from 12,000 to 14,000 annually; the baptisms from 300 to 400; and the Paschal Communions had attained the number of 2,000. Meanwhile, the confessions had so accumulated in numbers, that one of the confessionals could no longer be spared to serve as a sacristy. Father Maurice Mann, missionary from 1847 till 1851, not very efficiently supplied the want by the erection of a small square room, so little in keeping with anything about it, that it well deserved its nickname of the "wart." Father Hill's coadjutors were Father Selby and Father M'Quoin, and so continued till 1864, when Father Gradwell took Father M'Quoin's place, and in 1878 was put in charge of the mission—a charge which carried down the history of the direction of the parish to a very recent period, and when added to fourteen years of previous residence forms one of exceptional record. As Father Seed rendered excellent service to the whole town when, on the 29th of April, 1854, he introduced into it the Notre Dame Religious, who have recently entered into possession of their grand

new convent, with its large body of pupil-teachers and flourishing high school for ladies; so Father Hill left behind him an abiding memorial of his term of office in the fine-toned bell that can be heard in all the country around. He cannot with any justice be held responsible for the absence of a fitting campanile or for the presence of the wooden belfry, of which the only thing that can be said is that, however unsightly, it serves the purpose of a covering. Father John O'Reilly signalized his term of office by the acquisition, in 1868, of a new organ, built by Conacher and Sons, and supplied by them with an hydraulic blower. This organ still retains the excellent quality of its tones.

As it may interest some of our readers to know what Fathers have been connected in recent years with this Mission, we here give the names of certain Fathers who are still well remembered by the congregation. Among these have been, in addition to the priests already mentioned—

Father Joseph Postlewhite	Father Martin Everard,
„ Thomas Selby,	„ John Beall,
„ Edward Whyte,	„ Joseph Johnson,
„ John Baptist di Pietro,	„ John Young,
„ Stephen Bond,	„ Vincent Zanetti,
„ Francis Jarrett,	„ George Kammerlocher,
„ Thomas Speakman,	„ John Turner,
„ John Moore,	„ Frederick O'Hare,
„ John MacLeod,	„ William Shapter,
„ Frederick Hopkins, <sup>1</sup>	„ Walter Strappini,

concluding with its present head priest, Father Patrick Hayden.

In every Catholic district the parochial and ministerial work of founding schools, guilds, and confraternities must be a matter of the highest importance, and so about the year 1819, when 450 children attended the Sunday school, and only 12 boys and 12 girls found room in the day school, more suitable schools were built in Rodney Street, near King Street, and facing the old Grammar School of the

<sup>1</sup> Now Titular Bishop of Athribis and Vicar Apostolic of British Honduras.

town. Though very plain in architecture, they were well suited to their object, according to the number of children attending them. We read of appeals being made in 1830 and 1831 by the trustees and conductors of the Sunday schools for an increase of contributions towards their support. They are able to state that thirty poor children are gratuitously educated at the day school from the funds of their charitable institution. While a Sick Club had been established for several years in connection with the Sunday school, and another fund existed in it for distributing clothes during the winter to the most needy amongst the children.

In proportion, however, as the congregation of St. John's increased, the building in Rodney Street was found too small, besides being too far from the church. A plot of ground was then bought, under the direction of Father Hearn, in Dicconson Street, who lived to see the schools opened there shortly before his death, in 1847. They are still in use and are of good size, though the lower room, now St. John's Hall, is gloomy and has a low ceiling. An infant school-room was added alongside, by Father Mann, in 1850. Later on Father Gradwell built a second infant school, forming a small wing on one side of the school front, and a new class-room facing it on the opposite side. Great improvements have quite recently been made in the upper rooms, now forming the boys' school; and a large and handsome school has been built on ground bought for this purpose, and constitutes the very handsome and well-appointed girls' school. During Father Seed's time, the late Father Joseph Howell leased two cottages in the lower part of the town, in Caroline Street, down Wallgate, and had temporarily fitted-up there a school for the children who lived at too great a distance to walk as far as Dicconson Street. Father Howell soon after left for Jamaica, and the school was named after St. Joseph, in memory of him, the title being retained by the new secular church, which occupies the same ground. Guilds for the boys and girls have been instituted, and have met for many years on Sundays in the Dicconson Street Schools, and Sunday classes have been taught there in the afternoons.

A Christian Doctrine Confraternity was formed of the young and middle-aged men in 1858, directed at one time by the late Mr. Benson, J.P. In 1871, public Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the church was introduced on Sunday afternoons for the benefit of the guilds and Sunday schools, and became an institution carefully maintained. The year 1875 was marked by the building of the new presbytery fronting Powell Street, which brought the priest's residence into immediate connection with the church.

In the matter of providing for the temporal and spiritual wants of the sick and poor, the good people of Wigan did not wait for the more philanthropic spirit of these days to set them the example, but as far back as the year 1780, they established a charitable association under the title of "The Roman Catholic Society in Wigan," with the express object of raising and maintaining a fund for the "relief of the sick, maimed, aged, and infirm members of the same, for the burial of members happening to die, and of the wives of such members, under certain conditions, as well as for the benefit of the widows and children, or the next of kin." Provision was also made that a certain number of Masses should be said for deceased members immediately after death. The Society spent a great deal of care from time to time in amending the rules and regulations which they drew up to attain these ends. Thus on the 13th of October, 1794, they took the precaution of having these duly allowed and confirmed at the general Quarter Sessions of the Peace for Wigan. A subsequent revision, with additions, was sanctioned in the same way both on the 8th and 10th of October, 1796. Besides the repetition of this act in 1805, a fresh revision of its rules marks the vitality of the Society in the year 1820, after which no further action was recorded until 1877. At that date they were considered too antiquated in form to be applicable to the present times, and after revision by a committee especially appointed for the purpose, they obtained Father Henry Walmesley's full approval, and were adopted and printed. With a new constitution, as it were, the association now bears the title of "St. John's

Catholic Union Society." As this institution is the most ancient and venerable of all in the district, and as its lists of members perpetuate the memory of persons and families whose names have been for more than a century as household words in Wigan and its neighbourhood, it is to be hoped that the commencement of the new century will confirm its stability and increase the number of its members. Other records bear testimony to the existence in the years 1824 and 1825, of a "Catholic Benevolent Society," under the direction of Fathers Newsham and Postlewhite, Charles Walmesley, Esq., being its President. Its object was to supply the temporal needs of the sick and very poor, through annual and voluntary subscriptions. The Society, however, having possessed no corporate union to maintain its life, seems to have long ceased to exist.

The still existent "St. Joseph's Spiritual Association" was instituted chiefly as a Purgatorial Confraternity, and has also a very venerable history. When initiated, it does not appear to have been at once placed under the patronage of St. Joseph, and unfortunately the first publication of its aim and regulations, though in old-style printing, does not bear any date. These are, however, identical with the rules subsequently issued, when the month chosen for collecting the subscriptions of its members was changed from December to March. It was fixed that "an annual Mass should be said on the 19th of March, being St. Joseph's feast, the Patron of the Society, in the Catholic Chapel, in Wigan, to beg the Blessing of Almighty God upon the Society, and in honour of St. Joseph, under whose Protection we place ourselves." One Mass was also to be offered on the first Friday of every month, for the living and the dead, of the Society, and one Mass also for every member who dies, besides one for a member when in danger of death.

It is not to be expected that St. John's Church should be without its Altar Society. The date of its inauguration cannot be easily ascertained, but it has done good work for a considerable period. After some tendency to decline, it was re-inaugurated by Father Bond. An increased sub-

scription now supplies it with a fuller fund for the benefit of the decorations and services of the church.

In 1886, the Apostleship of Prayer was inaugurated with great ceremony, and in the same year renewed impetus was given to the boys' school especially, under the present thoroughly trained and experienced school-master. For a year or two before the close also of the decade just expired, a general movement was set on foot throughout Wigan to revive the old but interrupted custom of "Walking Days," and as it was taken up by the Catholics with energy and determination, it proved a complete success. The walking day soon developed into a Whit-Monday procession, enlivened by bands of music, and, by help of a number of rich and expensive banners, rendered more definite in its religious character and in its profession of faith. In 1890, under the late Father Bond's care, the Christian Doctrine Society was rehabilitated and set on an improved working basis; and in June of the same year 960 persons were admitted into the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart. Within late years a St. John's Young Men's Club was inaugurated, and a suitable home found for it in the house occupied for many years by the Fathers of the mission, on the right hand side of the entrance into the chapel yard. These different works of solid aim and industry are still being carried out, and still appeal to all desirous of promoting and sympathizing with the good success and prosperity of the old district of St. John's, which has been fighting its way onward, and has done a fair amount of good work, for the past three hundred years.

