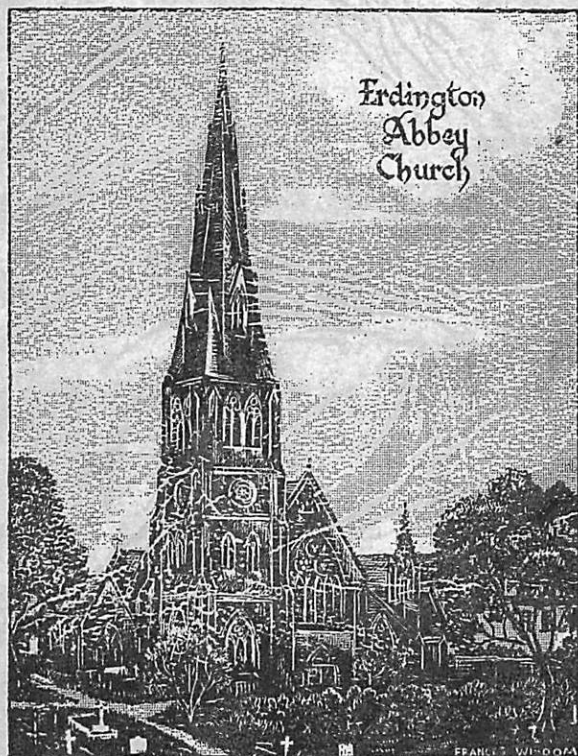
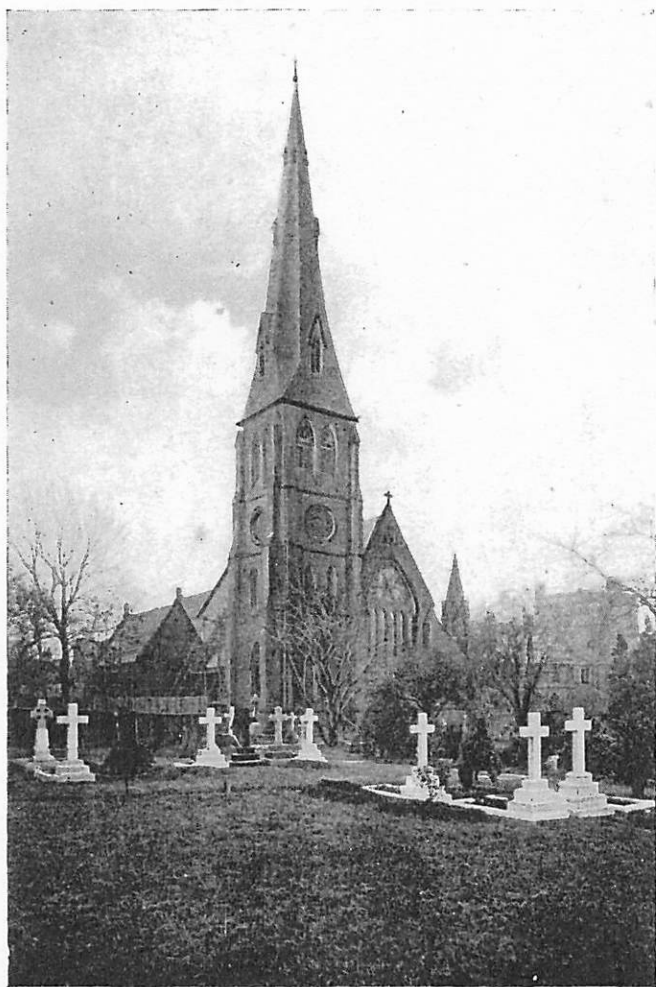


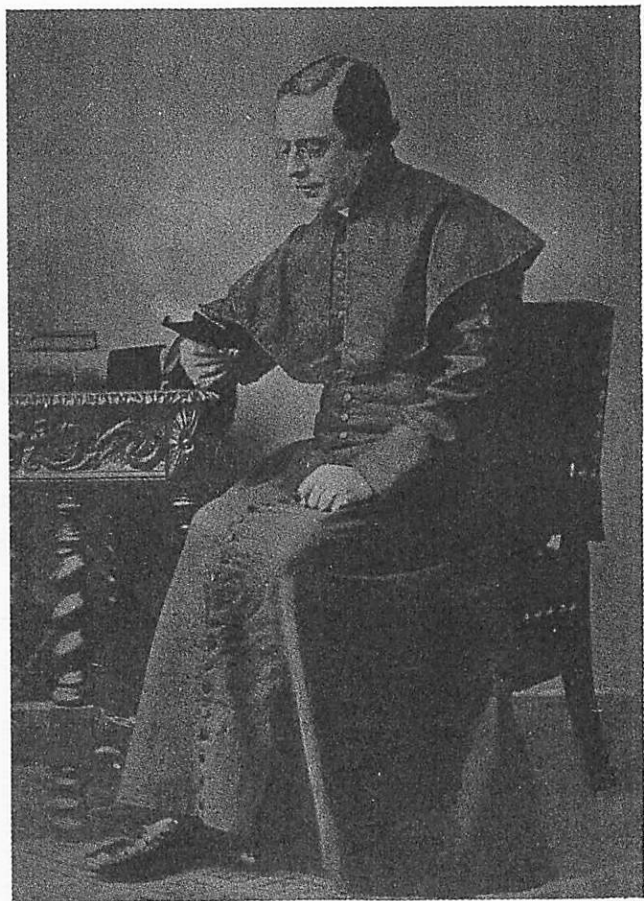


1850 - 1950

A SHORT HISTORY
OF THE
PARISH
OF
SS. THOMAS & EDMUND OF CANTERBURY
ERDINGTON



Church of SS. Thomas and Edmund of Canterbury, Erdington



Father Haigh—The Founder



His Grace The Archbishop of Birmingham

FOREWORD.

Early in the last century there was one Catholic family in the hamlet of Erdington. About thirty years later, when the stage coach from Birmingham (about four miles away) rumbled through the village on its way to Sutton Coldfield and Lichfield, it passed the Catholic Church whose centenary of consecration fell on June 11th, 1950. In that church 18 infants were baptised in 1850; fifty years later there were 52; and in 1949 there were 110. In the same area (extending to Coleshill, seven miles away), where formerly there was one parish, there are now seven with a total of about 10,000 Catholics—a remarkable development. St. Paul told the Corinthians: "I have planted, Apollo watered; but God gave the increase." The following pages give a short account of the growth of the Faith in Erdington and are offered as a very simple tribute to those who planted and those who watered.

I.

1820—1876.

With the building of Shortheath House in 1820, by George Wells, the revival of the Faith in Erdington may be said to have begun, for the house had a little chapel in which, for a time, a weekly Mass was celebrated. Some years later, Mass was celebrated each Sunday in Mr. Mackay's house in the village High Street.

The foundation of Oscott College in 1838 gave Catholics in the neighbouring districts (including Erdington) the opportunity of regular attendance at Holy Mass in the College Chapel. In the following year there came to live at Oscott one who did so much to revive the Faith in England, the Hon. George Spencer—a few years later he became Father Ignatius, the Passionist. While at Oscott he devoted part of his time to pastoral work in Erdington, where he made several converts; Francis Genders, a subsequent benefactor, was one. In 1840 the little chapel of St. Nicholas (designed by Pugin) was built nearby at Boldmere, where the saintly Passionist, the Ven. Dominic Barberi, said Mass on several occasions. Thanks to Father Spencer's zeal, there were now (1840) sufficient Catholics in Erdington to have a chapel of their own; in Bell Lane (now Orphanage Road) there was an unused chapel which they rented and used until 1848.

While these events were taking place, a young attaché at the British Embassy in Paris was slowly making up his mind to devote his life to the service of God. A man of good family, he had prospects of a brilliant career in the diplomatic service; his name was Henry Pelham Heneage. After much correspondence with Father Spencer, he went, in 1841, as a student to Oscott, where he was ordained in the March of 1843 when he took over the district of Erdington, though he continued to live at Oscott. Two years later he paid a visit to his friends in Paris, with the object of collecting funds to build a church; his efforts were successful. In 1846 he became the first resident priest in Erdington and, on a site near the junction of Edwards Road and High Street, built a chapel dedicated to Our Lady and St. Francis of Sales. In spite of constant bad health, Father Heneage worked on; but in 1848 he was forced to resign and he took up lighter duties at the Good Shepherd Convent, Hammersmith, where he died on January 3rd, 1873. He was a man of great holiness and outstanding humility and was held in great esteem by Cardinal Wiseman, who chose him as his confessor.

Early in 1847 there went to Oscott a young convert, Daniel Henry Haigh, who attributed his conversion to the writings of the Venerable Bede and to the prayers of St. Thomas of Canterbury. He was already well advanced in his studies and was ordained on April 8th, 1848. Being a man of means, he had, while at Oscott, resolved to build a church in thanksgiving for his conversion; it was to be consecrated under the invocation of two Archbishops of Canterbury, St. Thomas the Martyr, and St. Edmund Rich. The plans were quickly matured; Charles Hansom was the architect and he was ably assisted by Father Haigh himself whose skill and taste were of no mean order.

A few weeks after his ordination and appointment to Erdington, Father Haigh laid the foundation stone—on May 26th. Early in 1850 (on the feast of St. Francis of Sales), the new church was blessed and opened: on June 11th (feast of St. Barnabas) it was consecrated by Dr. William Bernard Ullathorne, Vicar Apostolic of the Central District and soon to become the first Bishop of the new diocese of Birmingham. Father Haigh's next care was to collect relics for his church for which purpose he made several pilgrimages abroad; he was singularly successful and left a collec-

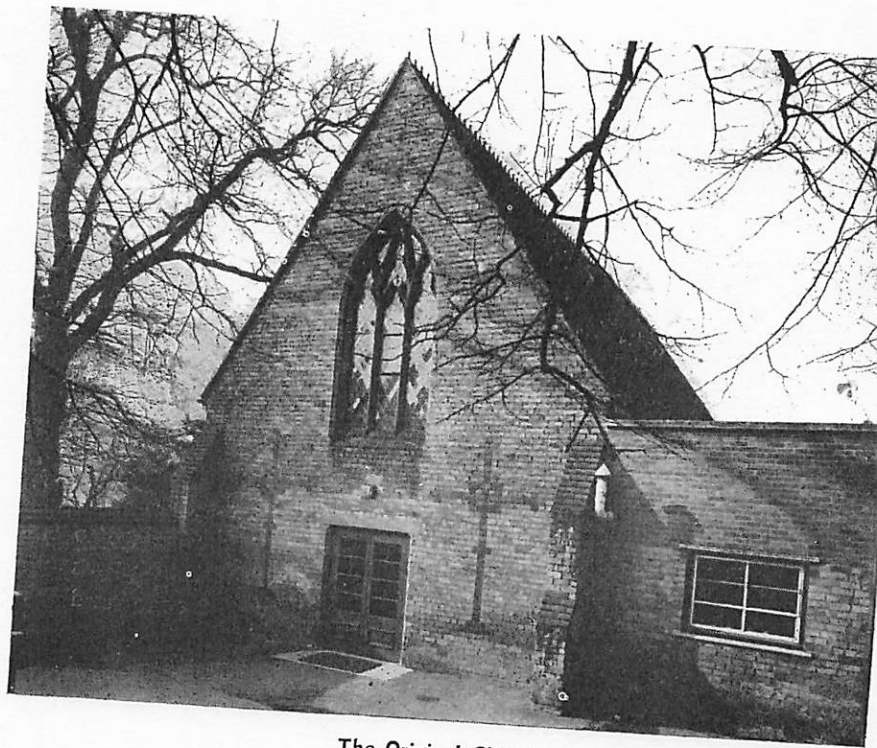
tion quite remarkable for a small parish church—the most precious is a relic of the True Cross. It is said to have belonged to the crown jewels and to have been taken to Spain for safety by Philip II; through the influence of Cardinal Wiseman it was given to Father Haigh for his new church.

The Catholics of Erdington now had a beautiful church—but no school; but they had not long to wait for the latter. The brick chapel erected by Father Heneage was pulled down and re-built in the churchyard where it still stands—a weather-beaten centenarian; it is now the assembly hall of the new school.

A word should be said of Father Haigh's erudition. He had a very good knowledge of art and music and he was an authority on Anglo-Saxon antiquities, numismatics, biblical archaeology and oriental studies; he was the chief authority in England on runic literature. Four books came from his pen, but the bulk of his literary work was published in the journals of various archaeological and historical societies. Gillow, in his *Bibliographical Dictionary of English Catholics*, says, "Mr. Haigh was a man of great intellectual depth and culture."

Father Heneage had worked hard in laying the spiritual foundations of the parish, and Father Haigh continued the good work with great success. He had a deep love of the liturgy which he carried out with reverence and decorum; and considering the limited resources of the parish, the result was wonderful. He had a surpliced choir with cantors in copes; and they were trained to sing plain chant, as also were the children. His greatest joy was to preside at some solemn function assisted by the choir and surrounded by his parishioners.

With regard to God's house Father Haigh was unsparing, and nothing was too good: but with regard to himself he was not so particular, for he lived in a cottage close by the lichgate on Sutton Road. Beneath its roof he used to shelter orphan boys until such time as he could find suitable homes for them. Patient, calm and meek, he never seemed to be in a hurry; he was never too busy to receive the poor, the sad and the afflicted, and to welcome them with open heart and hand; nor did he tire of rescuing souls from danger or sin. His natural endowments and the wealth he had inherited he regarded as given him by God to be used for His glory; small wonder then that, towards the end of his life,



The Original Church
(Now the Assembly Hall of the New School)



Interior of the Assembly Hall

given to the Bishop of that city by Francis Genders, who spent his declining years tending the cemetery where he now lies at the foot of the crucifix on the little mound lying in the shadow of the church he loved so well.

The death of Father Haigh took place at Oscott on Saturday, May 10th, 1879. On the Tuesday there was a solemn Requiem in the college chapel; later in the day the body was taken down to the lodge where the congregation was waiting to escort the remains of their deeply-loved pastor to the church. The Office for the Dead was sung by the monks and the village choir; next morning, during a terrifying thunderstorm, a solemn Requiem was chanted. He was buried in St. Joseph's chapel; over the grave is a brass showing Father Haigh vested for Mass and with the following inscription:

" Here rests in peace Rev. D. H. Haigh, born August 7th, 1819. Having exhausted his substance in erecting this church, and his strength in feeding his flock, he entrusted these both to St. Benedict's sons and died in the Lord, May 10th, 1879."

Daniel Henry Haigh was a saintly man of unobtrusive holiness and his virtues are recorded in the Book of Life. He was also a man of erudition and his name is found in the Dictionary of National Biography, where he receives honourable mention. It would be to our shame were his memory allowed to die out among us who owe him so great a debt of gratitude.

The initial difficulties and hardships were gradually overcome by the monks who were greatly cheered and encouraged by the kindness of the clergy at Oscott and the friendliness of the people of Erdington. Life in the cottage priory could not have been easy—for the community soon increased to eight choir monks and three lay brothers; they were certainly "cribbed, cabined and confined." Plans were made for a proper monastery and in about a year one wing (about half the present building) was completed; it was taken over on the feast of St. Teresa (October 15th), 1880.

The cottage priory was then turned into a grammar school; it opened in 1881 with 13 boys; within three years there were 60. The late Right Rev. James Dey, D.S.O., Bishop in Ordinary to H.M. Forces, was one of a number of well-known Catholics of the

Midlands who received their early training here. After nearly six years it was closed, the work being taken over by the Fathers of the Oratory at Edgbaston where it still flourishes.

The little chapel at Boldmere, having been closed for some years, was re-opened in 1883 and served regularly by the Fathers of the Priory. Boldmere is now a separate parish and the little chapel still stands, but it is now far too small; its place has been taken by one, albeit temporary, of considerably larger dimensions.

The Dominican Sisters from Stroud made a foundation at Erdington in 1890 and began teaching in the school—a work they have continued ever since with great devotion. Also, as far as opportunity allows, they do visiting in the parish. After two moves they finally settled in the present convent on the Sutton Road (at the corner of Holly Lane) where they have a flourishing private school.

In 1896 the Priory was canonically erected as an abbey and in consequence an extension of the building was begun; it was completed, together with the tower, two years later. Later on, a library and refectory were added. Dom Ansgar Höckelmann was appointed Abbot in July, 1899, and on September 3rd took place the solemn Benediction of the Abbot by Dr. Ilsley, Bishop of Birmingham. The event roused great interest even outside Catholic circles; and the Birmingham Press gave an excellent report of the ceremony together with a good description and explanation of the monastic life. The fiftieth anniversary of the consecration of the church was celebrated by a triduum, beginning on June 29th, and was the occasion of great joy to all. The priests had a devoted and responsive people. On the other hand, the people had zealous pastors; Divine Office was chanted day by day by the monks at regular hours; several Masses were said daily, in addition to the Conventual sung Mass; and the full liturgical life of the Church, season by season, could be enjoyed in all its splendour; all this, the people were quick to appreciate. In the last few years of the old century there had been a phenomenal increase in the population of Erdington; and the number of Catholics increased proportionately, and now numbered 1,100. It was hardly possible for them all to sit down to a feast together as on a previous occasion; but afternoon tea was freely provided and an entertainment, for the adults on one



Dom Lambert Nolle, O.S.B.

day, and on the next for the children. Some of the children who provided the entertainment fifty years ago, and a few of the adults who witnessed it, are still with us.

With the increase in population came the need for a larger school and in 1910 a junior school was built to accommodate 800 children. In recent years two additional classrooms have been added. The school was erected in memory of Dom Sylvester Schlecht, who had been parish priest since 1887, except for a few years when he had been Prior and superior; as Prior he was responsible for the extension of the monastery. He was a devoted pastor and had a genuine love of the poor. By his tact and courtesy he won the respect and confidence of all who knew him and his early death (he was only 46) in 1905 was mourned by Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

The late Dom Maternus Spitz is still remembered—a genial and kindly soul. He returned to the Abbey in 1924, for a brief visit, to celebrate the silver jubilee of his ordination, to the great delight of his many friends.

The memory of Dom Lambert Nolle—parish priest for some twenty years—is still green. In addition to his pastoral duties, he lectured at Oscott for a time on Catechetics, Liturgy and Pastoral Theology. Also he was a member of various local organisations, including the Citizens' Committee and the Technical Education Committee. Mr. Saxton, in his "Bygone Erdington" (a most interesting book), says that Father Lambert was largely responsible for the establishment of the Technical Schools in Edwards Road. For many years Dom Lambert was President of St. Thomas' Association—a club which he founded in 1897 and which still flourishes; its members have always been willing and generous helpers of the parish in various ways. After leaving Erdington he taught for some time in the Patriarchal Seminary in Jerusalem; then back to this Diocese to act as chaplain to Besford Court. A few years ago he returned to Weingarten Abbey, where he died on April 23rd, 1950—appropriately, Good Shepherd Sunday. He had been ordained nearly 56 years, and was in his 86th year.

Two others must be mentioned; both converts and both attached to the Erdington community from 1895 to 1912.

Dom John Chapman was successively Sub-prior, Novice Master and Prior. A man of deep learning over a wide range of subjects, he was probably the greatest patristic scholar of his day. As is well-known, he was elected Abbot of Downside in 1929 and died in office four years later.

Dom Bede Camm, well-known for his writings on the Elizabethan martyrs; the greater number of his books were written during the Erdington period; he did much to revive interest in the heroes of the Faith and to spread their fame. He was later affiliated to Downside where he died in 1942.

Erdington had long since lost its rural aspect and in 1911 it was brought within the City boundary of Birmingham and it was clear that it was only a question of time before the few remaining open spaces would be needed for houses. In 1917 the Benedictines decided to give up the Erdington foundation as soon as they could find a community to take over the mission. Eventually, arrangements were made with the Redemptorists who, with the approval of the Archbishop of Birmingham, took over the foundation and the care of the parish. Final negotiations were completed on 15th March, 1922.

The Benedictines had served the parish faithfully for over forty years and they left behind them a united and devoted people who deeply mourned their departure. Also they had long since been accepted by the people of Erdington as part of the community; they were on good terms with their neighbours, whose respect they had gained and among whom they counted many friends who were sorry to see them go. March 15th was a sad day. But, for the monks, there was a ray of sunshine; in returning to Germany they were reviving an ancient foundation which had stood for 750 years and was suppressed in the turbulent days of the early nineteenth century—the Abbey of Weingarten.



Abbey Front and Tower

III.

1922—1950.

As, in 1876, the newcomers had been greatly cheered and encouraged by the kindness of the clergy at Oscott and the friendliness of the people of Erdington, so it was with the Redemptorists in 1922. It is a pleasant duty to record the fact and express our gratitude. It has been known for a priest, appointed to take over the parish of some devoted and well-loved pastor, to receive a mixed welcome (the thaw usually sets in quickly). It must be said that the Redemptorists received a kindly welcome and that the people showed a spirit of co-operation; if, in rare cases, some good soul failed to realise that the place of the good Benedictines had to be taken by someone, it need cause no surprise or resentment. But rather we would recall, as typical of the general spirit, the graceful act of a parishioner who presented a picture of St. Alphonsus Liguori, the Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

On the feast of St. Clement Hofbauer (a Redemptorist saint, called by Karl Adam "the Apostle of Europe"), March 15th, 1922, Father John Charlton was installed as Rector and Father Joseph Hull as parish priest (subsequently both offices were combined). It is now nearly thirty years ago, and changes of various kinds are noticeable. People still speak of "going to the village," but the fields have disappeared long since. With the erection of new parishes the area of the Erdington parish is a good deal smaller, but the numbers have increased and six Masses are now necessary on a Sunday. The junior school in spite of recent additions is still not large enough and more accommodation must be provided; and so we might continue. It may be of interest to a younger generation to recall a few items still fresh in the memory of many of us. Soon after our arrival electric light was substituted for gas; this was done when the somewhat extensive repairs to the church were being made. Then for three years the monastery became the temporary home of our students, until a larger house was found at Hawkstone in Shropshire. In 1927 the spire was found to be unsafe; part had become so weatherworn that a whole section—to a height of about seven feet—had to be replaced. When this was completed, the whole structure was strengthened with concrete, and for some



months after the bells had to remain silent. They rang out again at the laying of the foundation of the Abbey Hall in June, 1928. Hitherto, the school had been used for various meetings and entertainments; but with the growth of the parish, a hall had become necessary. Brinscall House (once the home of Father Haigh's brother), adjoining the church, had already been acquired. Father F. Askew (once an architect) made a present of the plans; the hall was built on to the back of Brinscall House, the garden walls of which were pulled down as was also Father Haigh's old cottage. The bricks were all cleaned and used as the foundation. All this work was done by men of the parish, cheerful volunteers; even the children helped—stacking the bricks. Within six months the hall was completed; it is about 80' x 40' and seats nearly 500; at the further end there is a good stage, and in the centre of the proscenium the coat of arms of Father Haigh and the date 1848; and to the left and right, those of the Benedictines and the Redemptorists, with the dates 1876 and 1922. Shortly after its completion the hall was used as a dining room—a dinner was given to which were invited all those who had helped.

In the following year occurred an event of a different nature. Missions have been preached in the Abbey church at regular intervals; but the one in 1931, given by two Irish Redemptorists (Fathers Devine and McDonnell) was such an outstanding success that it is still remembered and spoken of by those who were present. Towards the end of the same year the novitiate for our lay brothers was opened at the monastery; it had, perforce, to close during the war and has since been transferred to our house at Bishop's Stortford.

A new sacristy supplied a long-felt need. Erected in memory of the Benedictines who worked for the parish, it lies to the south of St. Joseph's chapel with which it is connected by a door. All the woodwork and carving was done by one of our brothers. On its completion in 1934, the same brother transformed the old sacristy into a chapel of St. Alphonsus, and the inner (or Abbot's) sacristy into another chapel. When this was completed he made the teak benches in the nave, the carved sedilia on the sanctuary, and the front benches for the choir stalls; the same hands are responsible for the holy water urn of teak and copper.



Two unwonted events occurred in 1936; the Conference of Higher Studies in Easter week was held at the Abbey: High Mass in the Dominican rite, the celebrant being the newly ordained son of parishioners (a similar occasion had occurred 12 years previously).

Plans for a new school (senior) were prepared by Mr. Bower Norris and were approved by the Local Education Authority, who granted assistance to the full extent allowed by the new 1936 Act; the site for the new building was given by the Redemptorists as a mark of appreciation to our parishioners. Father Haigh's school was rejuvenated and (as already mentioned) incorporated in the new one as the Assembly Hall. The foundation stone was laid in March, 1937, but soon afterwards a delay occurred and building was not resumed until the following year. It was completed in 1940, though part of it was in use soon after the outbreak of war. In addition to the normal classrooms, it has rooms for science, woodwork and cookery, and a fine gymnasium. It is the central school for several parishes. Under the new Act it is a secondary school (modern).

With the advent of the war a fine substantial hut, built for our scouts, was taken over by the R.A.F.—not far away was a barrage balloon; on one occasion the balloon broke loose, and on another it caught fire (lightning); and on a number of occasions the cable came perilously near the top of the steeple.

Of the Fathers stationed at Erdington in September, 1939, most became Chaplains to the Forces and, between them, saw service on all the fronts except the Far East; three became prisoners—one at Dunkirk, another in Greece (voluntarily, he remained behind to tend the wounded), and the third in North Africa (later, in Italy, he nearly effected an escape, getting as far as the frontier).

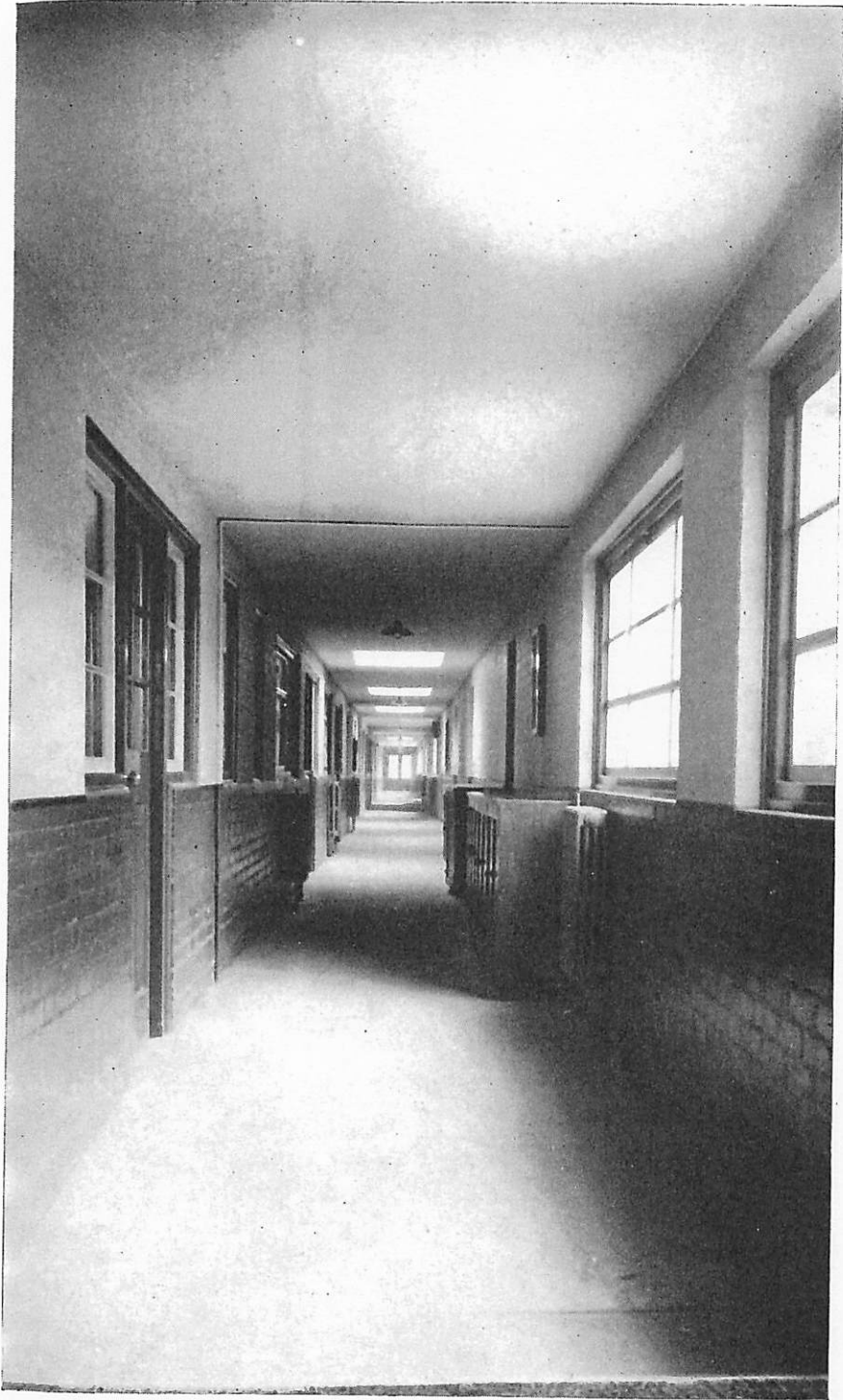
Of the war years nothing need be said except that here, as elsewhere, the people bore themselves well; and that, comparatively speaking, Erdington was quiet (metaphorically, it was not only in the sky that the A.A. batteries made their presence felt). The morning after the announcement of the cease fire in Europe there was a very large attendance at the Masses.



Main Entrance and Lower Half of the New (Secondary Modern) School

As our parishioners know, the chief purpose of the Redemptorist Congregation is to give missions to the people and retreats to the clergy and to members of religious orders. The average mission in this country lasts a fortnight; in a very small parish, a week; and in a large parish, three weeks (occasionally a month; but in some of the very large parishes in Scotland a mission lasts six weeks). Retreats vary, from six to eight days is the average; occasionally ten days. The Abbey makes a good centre for the Midlands and our people will be interested to know that since our coming here almost 2,000 missions and retreats have been given by the Fathers; this total does not include numerous other works, e.g., retreats to children, week-end retreats, novenas, and so on; nor has any count been taken of the many occasions when Fathers from here have gone to help in missions given by our other houses. By the goodness of God our efforts have been fruitful; but the success of such work depends upon the grace of God, and we earnestly commend it to the prayers of our people.

And so we come near to the end of the story. At the beginning of this section (Part III) we mentioned the friendly co-operation we received—enough has been said to show that it was not a polite fiction nor mere convention. Much has been done during the past 28 years; but it could not have effected without the generosity and self-sacrifice of our people. None of our parishioners is wealthy, but all have been generous and so there is no outstanding debt. Nor is it a question of money only; a number are equally generous with their time—helping the needy, visiting the aged and the sick, organising various activities (spiritual and social), painting the school, running the scouts and guides, looking after the catering, going round collecting from the members of various societies (e.g., the A.P.F., the Altar Society, the Diocesan Education Fund, and the New School Fund). How some find time is something of a mystery; but it is just those who are really busy who somehow find time to do a little more ("the little more and how much it is"). At the end will be found a list of the various societies in the parish; their purpose and scope vary, but between them they give ample opportunity for helping—directly or indirectly—in the work for souls. The chief qualities required are unselfishness and goodwill.



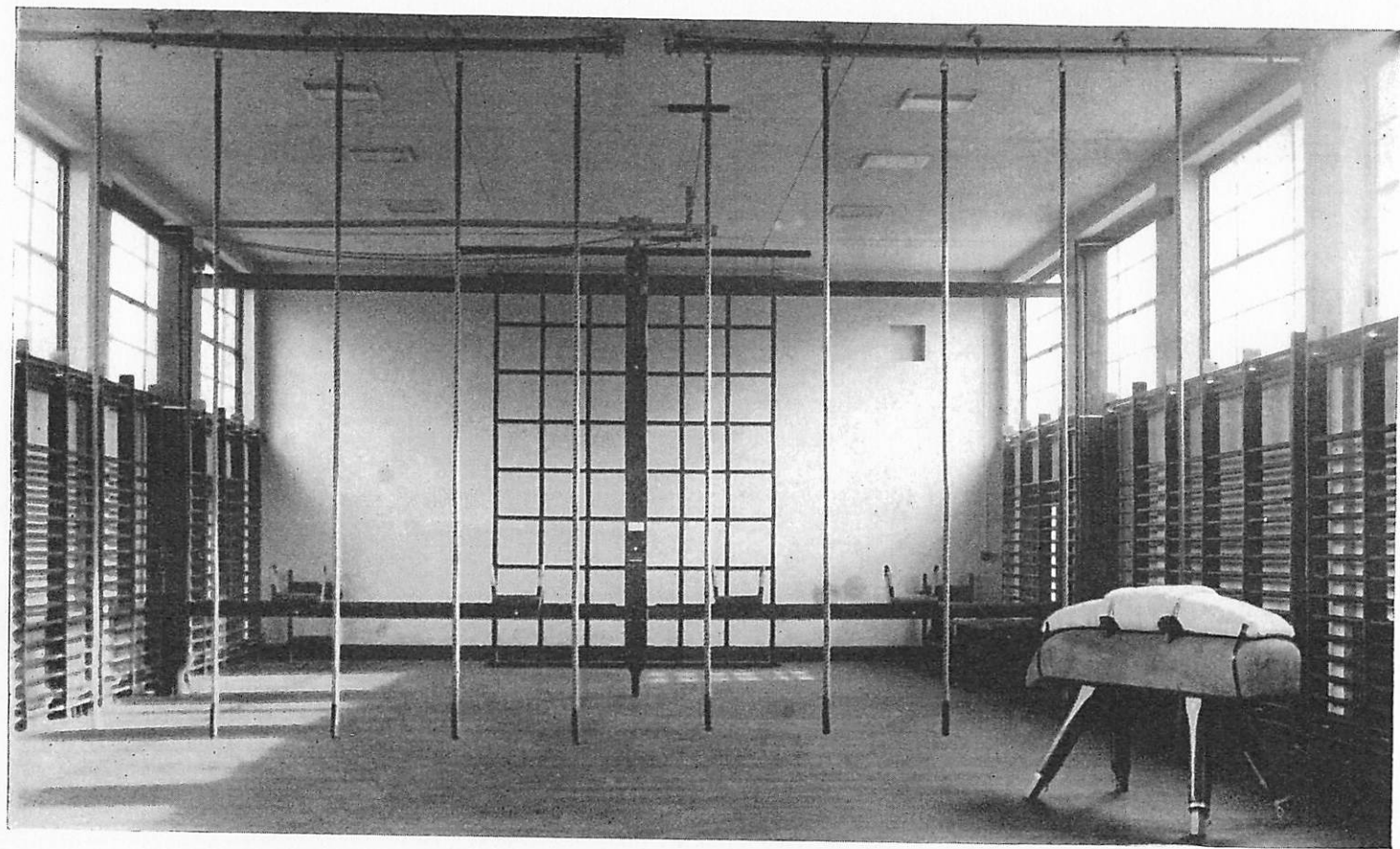
The Main Corridor of New School

Few more items, of interest to our parishioners, need be recorded. The Perpetual Novena in honour of Our Blessed Lady, under the title of Mother of Perpetual Succour, has been well attended since its introduction over three years ago and has been the means of bringing help and encouragement to more souls than we can tell; it is good to note that since the mission last year the attendance has increased. The new altar and shrine make a worthy addition to the church. The picture, blessed by Pope Pius IX, was given by Dr. Kirk over 50 years ago and one of his sons became a Redemptorist and worked on the parish here for a time when we first came.

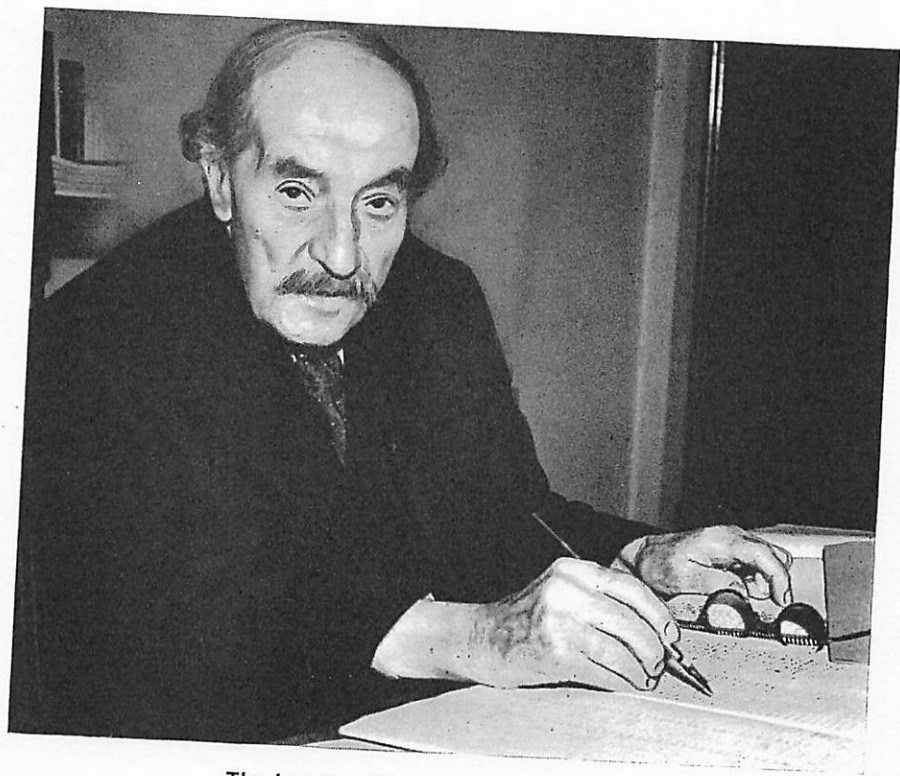
The formation of the Erdington Catholic Association a few years ago does not need any comment. For the benefit of newcomers we may say it was formed to unite Catholics into a coherent body and to help on the social life of the parish. They were responsible for the very successful "Schools Pools" (since found to be illegal) and have provided lecturers (including Dr. Newsome and Dr. Halliday Sutherland), concerts and entertainments. The rules are few and simple, and membership is open to families and to individuals. It is interesting to note that the Association is the second of its kind though its scope is much wider. The original Association was formed in 1873 to help Father Haigh to meet the expenses required for the upkeep of the church fabric and the school, and it lapsed with his death.

Of passing interest is the broadcast, on the overseas service, from the Abbey Church last year; it brought letters from parishioners in the Near East and in Spain.

The bells had to remain silent during the war; they could not be rung afterwards because the beams had become unsafe. The bells have gone to Loughborough to be re-cast, and the beams are being renewed; they will be back in the tower in time for the celebrations. Many peals have rung out on those bells; the following, each of 5,040 changes, are noteworthy—two of Grandsire Triples (one in 2 hours 57 minutes), and three of Stedman Triples (one in 2 hours 45 minutes).



The School Gymnasium



The late Mr. Thomas Oswald Williams

(Photo: "The Birmingham Mail")

For the work they have done, and are doing, in the parish, many deserve mention; a number, also, for their work in the Diocese; some for their work on the City Council or as Magistrates; and a few among them who knew Father Haigh and were his friends. To give all the names is impossible; to mention only a few would be unfair; to take one from each section would be a difficult choice; and to say no more would be churlish. If all those we would like to mention could meet together to select someone to represent them, we have no doubt about their choice; for there is a worthy representative of the rest; and in thus selecting one we wish to do honour to the many others whom we must leave to the Recording Angel.

Mr. Thomas Oswald Williams came to Erdington nearly 75 years ago and has lived here ever since. Soon after his arrival he joined the Erdington Catholic Association and was appointed its Secretary a little later—and thus began his long life of service. He knew Dr. Ullathorne quite well, and the succeeding Archbishops of Birmingham even better. He was elected to the Aston Board of Guardians (of which, later, he became Chairman) and was largely instrumental in obtaining a proper chapel (still in use) for the Catholics; then, a member of the Urban District Council (later, its Vice-Chairman); a member of the Warwickshire County Council; a county J.P.; a member of the City Council; then Alderman (the first Catholic). In 1923 he was elected Lord Mayor of Birmingham. His Holiness Pope Pius XI, in recognition of his many services, made him Knight Commander of the Order of St. Gregory the Great. Mr. Williams, now in his 96th year and retired from public life, is still active and goes to business each day; throughout his life, both public and private, he has ever been a staunch and zealous Catholic.

One other section deserves mention; though its numbers are few they help the work of the parish in many ways, and not least by their prayers. Some of their work is seen, but most of it is unobserved—for the life of our lay brothers is of its nature a hidden life. But it is a great vocation—a following of Our Divine Lord Who spent 30 years in obscurity.

The staffs of both schools, and all who assisted them, deserve our thanks. It was obvious that great care had been taken in training the children; and the costumes, dresses, and back cloth were excellent.

The Abbey Bells rang out merrily during the celebrations, the ringers being members of St. Martin's Guild, who very kindly volunteered their services.

* * * * *

Shortly after the celebrations, Father Hughes received word that he had been appointed Provincial of the English Province of the Redemptorists. At a large gathering in the Hall he thanked the parishioners for their co-operation and introduced the newly-appointed Rector and Parish Priest, Father Wilfrid Murray, C.S.S.R.

* * * * *

With deep regret we record the death of Mr. T. O. Williams on July 31st. Three days later there was a solemn requiem; His Grace the Archbishop was absent and he was represented by His Lordship Bishop Bright who gave the absolutions. The Lord Mayor of Birmingham, accompanied by members of the City Council, attended.

Little more need be added to what has already been said of Mr. Williams. He was a man of outstanding integrity who devoted his gifts and his substance to the service of God and of his fellow-men; as one writer said of him in the Press, "His many benefactions will never be fully known, because he was essentially a man who liked to do good works anonymously." May he rest in peace.

* * * * *

It is good to be able to record that St. Thomas' Guild of Change Ringers has been revived, thanks to the energy and zeal of one of the original members. Anyone who is interested and would like to learn can apply at the Abbey.

THE CHURCH is built of sandstone in the decorated gothic style of the 14th century. The tower and steeple (among the finest in Birmingham) rise to a height of 117' (which is also the exterior length of the church). On entering the main (west) door, a visitor would probably find the light somewhat dim—due to the absence of a clerestory; but on a clear day this serves to accentuate the beauty of the east window. The rood-screen, surmounted by the crucifix and two figures, is of carved stone and marble and of exquisite workmanship; just outside the screen, on either side, are statues (finely carved and painted) of the two patrons. The sanctuary is furnished with choir stalls of oak, carved sedilia, and a brass lectern of elaborate design; before the High Altar hang three lamps decorated with amethysts and rock crystals. Over the stalls on the north side are two arches through which the organ can be seen; beneath the organ loft is the chapel of St. Alphonsus and its panelled walls and ceiling are greatly admired; off this chapel is a smaller one with a carved stone altar, but the carving is not of a very high standard. Leaving St. Alphonsus chapel through its wrought iron gates, one sees, through three arches immediately to the right (i.e., north), the side chapel dedicated to the Passion; above its altar is a well carved crucifix and on either side the figures of Our Lady and St. John; on the altar table is a reliquary containing part of the amice of St. Thomas of Canterbury. In the north-west corner of the church is a spacious baptistery with a carved stone font. Immediately to the south of the rood-screen is the altar and shrine of Our Blessed Lady under the title of Mother of Perpetual Succour; between this altar and the adjoining side chapel is a large relic chest upon the panels of which are painted scenes from the life of St. Thomas. Immediately to the south of the Lady Altar is the side chapel dedicated to St. Joseph; as with the Passion chapel so here, there are three arches and the mouldings are beautifully ornamented with finely carved heads—as are, indeed, all the mouldings in the church. Above the altar on one side is a statue of St. Joseph, and on the other a statue of St. Zita (a servant maid to whom Father Haigh had a great devotion). At the foot of the altar lies buried the Founder of this church. On the brass surmounting his tomb the inscription begins:

“ Here rests in peace Rev. D. H. Haigh.”

PARISH PRIESTS.

1843—1848 FATHER HENRY HENEAGE.

1848—1876 „ DANIEL HAIGH.

BENEDICTINES.

1876—1878 DOM PLACID WOLTER.

1878—1879 „ BONIFACE WOLFF.

1879—1882 „ HILDEBRAND DE HEMPTINNE.

1882—1886 „ LEO LINSE.

1886—1887 „ BONIFACE WOLFF.

1887—1895 „ SYLVESTER SCHLECHT.

1895—1899 „ LAMBERT NOLLE.

1889—1905 „ SYLVESTER SCHLECHT.

1905—1922 „ LAMBERT NOLLE.

REDEMPTORISTS.

1922—1924 FATHER JOSEPH HULL.

1924—1927 „ GEORGE STEBBING.

1927—1930 „ BERTRAND UPTON.

1930—1933 „ JAMES LOUGHMAN.

1933—1939 „ AUSTIN MACCABE.

1939—1945 „ LAWRENCE HULL.

1945—1950 „ WILFRID HUGHES.

1950— „ WILFRID MURRAY.

LIST OF VARIOUS SOCIETIES IN THE PARISH.

CATHOLIC YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY.

CHILDREN OF MARY.

ERDINGTON CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION.

GUILD OF ST. STEPHEN.

LEGION OF MARY (Two Praesidia).

ST. THOMAS' ASSOCIATION (Men's Club).

ST. THOMAS' GUILD OF CHANGE RINGERS.

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL.

WOMEN'S GUILD.

BOY SCOUTS AND BOYS' SWIMMING CLUB.

DRAMATIC SOCIETY.

FOOTBALL CLUB.

GIRL GUIDES.

TENNIS CLUB.

Also a number of parishioners are active members of the following Societies, which are not parochial:

ARCHDIOCESAN GUILD OF CATECHISTS.

BIRMINGHAM ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC TRADE UNIONISTS.

KNIGHTS OF ST. COLUMBA.

YOUNG CHRISTIAN WORKERS.



Part of the Corpus Christi Procession (June 11th)



Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour