

## **The Salford Diocesan Archive.**

The Salford Diocesan Archive consists of a collection of papers, manuscripts, correspondence, printed material, books and ledgers, photographs and memorabilia preserved by design and by chance from the working documents of the diocese. The content closely mirrors the history and activity of the diocese. This article will attempt briefly to outline that history, describe the main contents of the archive, and detail access arrangements.<sup>1</sup>



### **Historical Outline**

Following the Reformation, Roman Catholics became a persecuted minority within the realm. Most archive material for this period is to be found in Anglican and State archives in this country, or in national and municipal archives on the Continent (confiscated and placed there after the French Revolution), or in the Vatican and Propaganda Fide Archives in Rome, or in surviving religious communities abroad with English connections. Some material returned to England with the re-establishment in this country of Catholic religious communities fleeing persecution on the Continent. More recently the Lisbon College Archive was transferred to Ushaw College following the close of that seminary.

The Catholic Relief Acts of 1778 and 1791 removed many of the punitive measures under which the Catholic community lived. Priests could once again legally stay and work in the realm. Catholic chapels could be openly built and registered, and Catholic schools and schoolteachers operate. The legal emancipation of Catholics that should have been part of the 1800 Act of Union became the subject of a royal crisis of conscience, and was a nearly annual feature in the life of both Houses of Parliament until finally granted in 1829. The few remaining anti-Catholic pieces of legislation were removed one by one over the next century and a half.

After the Elizabethan Religious Settlement, the Catholic community in this country existed without the benefit of Episcopal government. Secular clergy worked under their mission oaths, and regular clergy under their religious superiors. Such a chaotic state was probably tolerated by Rome initially in the hope that a political settlement might still be achieved. When this hope was finally extinguished, a bishop was appointed under the title of "Vicar Apostolic" who reported directly to Rome. His pastoral area was then divided into four "Vicariates", as Vicars Apostolic were appointed for London, the Midlands, the West and the North. The expansion of the Catholic community during the Industrial Revolution necessitated a further division in 1840 into eight areas, with Lancashire and Cheshire forming the Lancashire Vicariate. In 1850 the restoration of a permanent hierarchy of bishops and dioceses took place amid a certain anti-Catholic tension, partly occasioned and then deflated by the epistolary skills of Nicholas Wisemen, the new Archbishop of Westminster. One effect was a piece of legislation forbidding Catholics to name their dioceses after existing Anglican dioceses.

Lancashire was divided into two Catholic dioceses, Liverpool and Salford. At that date there was no Anglican diocese of Liverpool, but there was of Manchester. The newly erected Salford Diocese consisted of the Anglo-Saxon Hundreds of Salford and Blackburn. A third Hundred that originally should have been part of the diocese was instead placed in Liverpool Diocese, which in 1924 was itself divided when the new Catholic diocese of Lancaster was formed. Cheshire together with Shropshire and parts of North Wales formed the 1851 Catholic diocese of Shrewsbury, although the areas of Wales were later detached.

Traditionally certain parts of Lancashire were as strongly Catholic as others were Dissenting. The nineteenth century saw a transition from the family chaplaincies based on the recusant families to missions funded by their individual congregations. The rural missions thus created remain nearly intact even today. The main expansion of Catholicism took place in the urban areas of the industrialised towns and valleys. This expansion continued until very recent times, with a massive church and school building programme being mounted after the Second World War as slum clearance decimated the earlier inner city parishes, and occasioned the growth of new overspill estates both within and just outside the diocesan boundaries. The main constituents of Lancashire Catholicism therefore were the "Old Catholics" of recusant stock;

the Irish (and English born Irish) who had been coming over to Lancashire to work in the fields, and then on the canals and railways and in the new industries from the end of the eighteenth century (well before the notorious "Potato Famine" of the mid 1840s); and those English men and women, sometimes of wealth and social and academic prestige, who became converts to Catholicism from the mid nineteenth century onwards.

Catholic schools and other educational establishments linked families and children closely to their parishes. It has been claimed that parishes tried to offer their parishioners a baptismal font to grave support. Some<sup>2</sup> have interpreted this as a ghetto mentality. However viewed, this parochiality has now been largely eroded in our contemporary mobile and multifaceted society. The increasing secularisation and individualisation of society in the present century, especially since the period of the Second Vatican Council, has apparently begun to effect the Catholic community in a similar way to its effects on the Established Church and on non-Conformity in earlier decades, although interpretations as to its effects differ from an expectation of imminent revival to a diagnosis of terminal decay!



## **Archive Contents**

We now need to consider the archive material and ephemera that the Catholic community generated over the last two centuries, and identify which elements are present in the Salford Diocesan Archives.

### **Early Material**

Much of the archival material pertaining to the diocesan area when it formed part of the Northern District is to be found in the Leeds Diocesan Archives. Some material from the period of the Lancashire District was deposited by the Liverpool Archdiocese at the Lancashire Record Office in the early 1960s.

### **The Acta of the early Bishops.**

The Salford Diocesan Archival holdings substantially start with the creation of the diocese in 1851. The early bishops, Turner 1851-1872; Vaughan 1872-1892, and Bilsborrow 1892-1903 have much of their official papers preserved in bound volumes which are known as the "Acta". In these will be found the many pastoral letters and "Ad Clerum" or instructions to the clergy, together with a mass of forms, circulars and allied material. Of particular interest is the annual "Poor and New Mission" pastorals issued nearly every autumn, as they traditionally recorded progress in the diocese over the previous year. Reports by Vaughan on San Lucar and on Sir John Sutton's seminary at Bruges are held. On-going cataloguing of this material is in hand, and lists of the Acta of Bishop Turner, who laid down the foundations of Catholic education within the diocese, and Bishop Bilsborrow have been prepared. One for Bishop (later Cardinal) Vaughan is nearing completion. Bishop Henshaw's bound Acta (1925-1938) are also held.

Similar material for Bishop Marshall (1938-1955) exists, but is found distributed among several of the two hundred and more boxes which form the main holdings of the archive. Material for the episcopates of Bishop Beck (1955-1964), later Archbishop of Liverpool and Bishop Holland (1964-1984) have not yet been catalogued.

### **Louis Charles Casartelli, Academic and Bishop**

Among the Bishops of Salford there is one academic and intellectual giant of international reputation: Louis Charles Casartelli. Born in Manchester, he specialised in Eastern languages at Louvain University and taught at both Salford Catholic Grammar School and at St Bede's College, Manchester, where he served as rector. He returned periodically to Louvain to lecture in Sanskrit, Zend and Pehlavi, while also lecturing in Iranian languages at Manchester University. He was President of the Manchester Dante Society and a member of the Royal Asiatic Society. His patronage was sought and received by many non-church societies, and he took special interest in the plight of Belgium refugees during the First World War, and in the restocking of the destroyed library of his beloved University at Louvain.

Not only do we have his "Acta", but also many of his copy letters, and most of his personal diaries for the period of his episcopate, together with some of his academic writings. He strongly believed in using the laity. The "Catholic Federation" was one organisation he

founded, and bound volumes of "The Catholic Federationist" are held, together with many publications of the Catholic Social Guild.

### **Diocesan Administration**

Some records of early diocesan administration have been preserved, including financial ledgers, minute books and property deed indexes. Boundary Board material, Building Office papers and School Emergency Fund documents are complemented with a host of as yet unsorted correspondence to the Vicar General in the early 1900s and a complete set of parish visitation reports for 1900.

### **Educational Material**

Catholic education and the provision of schools of all types provide another major area in the archive's holdings. The contents of several boxes have been listed in detail, although much work remains to be done. The contents reflect the history of education in the country from the initial government grants<sup>3</sup> first paid to Catholic schools in the early 1850s, through the 1862 Revised Code and the 1870 and subsequent Education Acts. For Catholics, education was an area where no defeat could easily be tolerated: one unhappy precedent, one case lost, could have an effect on every Catholic school not only within the diocese but across the country, as witness the case of St Robert's Primary School in Longsight. The attitude of School Boards and later Local Education Authorities to Catholic schools varied from helpful to hostile. Consequent negotiations, political campaigning at local and national level, and an on-going dialogue within the Catholic community on the nature and practicalities of providing a Catholic Education form a significant holding. The detailed search for sites, the obtaining of permissions to build, and the staggering costs involved to a community not noted for its wealth add yet more material. Diocesan educational reports and statistics for the period 1874-1925 allow a rapid yet concise overview of this area.

**Unfortunately very few of the Headteachers' Log Books and the Managers' Minute Books, or the Admission Registers, have come into the possession of the Diocesan Archive. It has to be feared that much has been lost, although some material is deposited in the Lancashire Record Office and other municipal archives and local study centres.**

## **Catholic Organisations and Societies**

Information on many Catholic societies is held, usually in the form of their correspondence with the diocese. Some material, notably from the Catholic Women's League, and the Diocesan Scout Guild, has been directly deposited with the archive.

Material on religious congregations, some of which are still present in the diocese, constitute another important holding. The Society of the Divine Pastor and the Franciscan Sisters of the Holy Spirit were two diocesan foundations which did not survive, while the Cross and Passion Sisters<sup>4</sup> and the Franciscan Missionaries of St Joseph were two which thrived.

## **The Harvest Magazine**

For nearly a century, "The Harvest", a monthly magazine of the Children's Protection and Rescue Society, reflected the life of the diocese, with endless lists of donations received, but also occasionally brilliant short articles on matters of importance. Sadly the paper on which it was printed is succumbing to the ravages of age and acid-full paper. Currently a project is in hand to have the volumes microfilmed. A card index to items in "The Harvest" is being compiled by a dedicated volunteer.

## **Some recent research**

One area of the archive which has been used recently for quite substantial research has been that concerning the Second World War. Blitz damage and air raid precautions revealed some interesting facts. In Burnley, the children were divided into two groups. The first were those who could run home to their parents within five minutes of the air raid warning being sounded. The second group consisted of everyone else, and those children the parents did not wish to come home! The effect of curfews, shortages, and the absence of men in the forces on church services and parish life were significant. As priests volunteered to serve as Forces Chaplains, Irish priests came on loan to replace them. One priest, born of an English mother and an American father, found himself as an alien under nighttime curfew, which posed difficulties when called out in emergencies. Another well loved priest, Fr Fracassi, was interned and sent to Canada. He died when his ship was sunk in mid Atlantic.

Work on preparing biographical notes of the secular priests who have worked in the diocese has been going on for several years. Some priests were quite mobile, moving between dioceses, and to and from religious orders, with some emigrating to foreign lands. Contrary to popular belief, not all priests were Irish. About a third of the nineteenth century clergy came from the Continent, a third from Ireland, and a third from England. During the nineteenth century, Lancashire provided as many priests to work in England as did Ireland<sup>5</sup>.

Material for the history of parishes is held under several different headings and anyone involved in preparing a parish history is urged to contact the archivist at an early stage of their research to gain an overview of the material available.

### **Genealogical Information**

The Salford Diocesan Archive has a deliberate policy of not holding parish registers, and consequently cannot undertake genealogical research. Many of the nineteenth century registers of baptisms, marriages, confirmations, deaths and burials have been deposited by the individual parishes at the Lancashire Record Office. Some parishes still hold their own early registers. During the Second World War, many such registers were microfilmed, usually for the period 1870-1941, and copies of selected microfilms are held by many local studies centres, with the original deposit being located at the Lancashire Record Office. Genealogists seeking the location of Catholic registers will find useful lists in the six volumes prepared by Michael Gandy<sup>6</sup>.

### **Printed material**

Although strictly not archives in a technical sense, the Salford Diocesan Archives holdings are complemented by an extensive collection of parish histories, a nearly complete run of the "Salford Diocesan Almanac" from 1877 to date, and a fairly substantial collection of the national "Catholic Directories" from the 1840s onwards. There is also a collection of photographs, of people, buildings and events. The identification of many photographs poses a challenge today. Finally researchers have access to a library of nearly a thousand books mainly devoted to nineteenth century and local Catholic history. Also available are most of the volumes of "Catholic Archives", "North West Catholic History"<sup>7</sup> and "Northern Catholic

History”<sup>8</sup>, together with a full set of the Catholic Record Society<sup>9</sup> volumes, and the periodical “Recusant History”

As the task of indexing and cataloguing progresses, a computerised index to the archives is being built up. There is an alphabetical index of the main contents, with box references. As indexing proceeds, each box is provided with a summary content sheet. When fully indexed, each box is also provided with a detailed list of its whole content. There are also indexes to the pamphlets, books, and working notes held in connection with the archive.



### **Access to the Archive**

The Salford Diocesan Archive is a private archive, similar to those supported by other Roman Catholic dioceses and religious congregations<sup>10</sup>. The nature, history and content of each archive structures both its holding and cataloguing, although the actual holdings are usually quite similar. Access is granted gladly to bona fide researchers. A room can be set aside for research, and photocopying facilities are available. It is suggested that the archivist be contacted directly, preferably by phone or by letter with an SAE, and that a brief outline be given of the type of material sought or the area of research being undertaken. This will permit a mutually agreeable time and date to be arranged for access to the archive, and for the relevant material to be brought in from out house storage. Usually access will be at St Mary’s Presbytery, Burnley. There is ample parking available, and access by public transport is good. A frequent and very economical bus service runs from Manchester to Colne, passing though Burnley Bus Station, some three minutes walk away. There is also an hourly express train service to Burnley from Leeds and Preston calling at Burnley Manchester Road Station, a mile in distance from the presbytery, and a local stopping service to Burnley Central Station from Preston and Colne. Travel details will be sent on request.

The Salford Diocesan Archives

Fr David Lannon is the archivist at present, and can be contacted at St Mary's Presbytery, 3 Todmorden Road, Burnley BB10 4AU. Telephone (01282) 422007; Fax (01282) 424622.

Footnotes

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier account of the Salford Diocesan Archives was published in North West Catholic History, p.73 Volume XX, 1993 .

<sup>2</sup> Gerard Patrick Connolly "Catholicism in Manchester and Salford 1770-1850: The quest for "le Chretien Quelconque""; unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Manchester 1980 and Stephen Fielding Class and Ethnicity 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Mention must be made here of the ED7 files at the Public Record Office at Kew which consist of the surviving grant applications from 1850-1920s from all schools, held in County order. They give important details of school plant, finances and staffing.

<sup>4</sup> Edna Hamer Elizabeth Prout 1820-1864 published Downside 1994 for an account of the work of the foundress in mid-Victorian Manchester slums.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Fitzgerald-Lombard English and Welsh Priests 1801-1914: a working list Downside 1993.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Gandy Catholic Missions and Registers 1700-1880 London 1993, especially Volume 5 North West England.

<sup>7</sup> North West Catholic History is the annual publication of the North West Catholic History Society, which organises occasional meetings throughout Lancashire, and publishes select pamphlets from time to time. For details, contact the Treasurer at 10 Ellesmere Rd, Pemberton, Wigan, Lancashire WN5 9LA.

<sup>8</sup> Northern Catholic History is the annual publication of the North East Catholic History Society, whose geographical area covers mainly Yorkshire and Tyneside. For information, contact Mrs G. Wells, 18 Tanfield Rd, Denton Burn, Newcastle on Tyne 15.

<sup>9</sup> The Catholic Record Society, founded in 1904, exists to advance the knowledge and study of Roman Catholicism in England and Wales since the Reformation. It continues to publish occasional volumes of historical records, issues an academic journal Recusant History twice a year, organises an annual conference and occasional regional study days. details of membership of this registered educational charity mat be obtained from Dr L. Gooch, 12 Melbourne Place, Wolsingham, Co Durham DL13 3EH.

<sup>10</sup> The Catholic Archives Society provides a platform for diocesan and religious archivists to meet and exchange information, ideas, and methodologies. The CAS runs an annual

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conference, and publishes Catholic Archives annually and a Bulletin occasionally. Catholic Archives frequently publishes descriptions of the holdings of different religious and diocesan archives. For fuller details, contact the Secretary, Mrs M. Harcourt-Williams, Innyngs House, Hatfield Park, Hatfield, Herts, AL9 5PL.