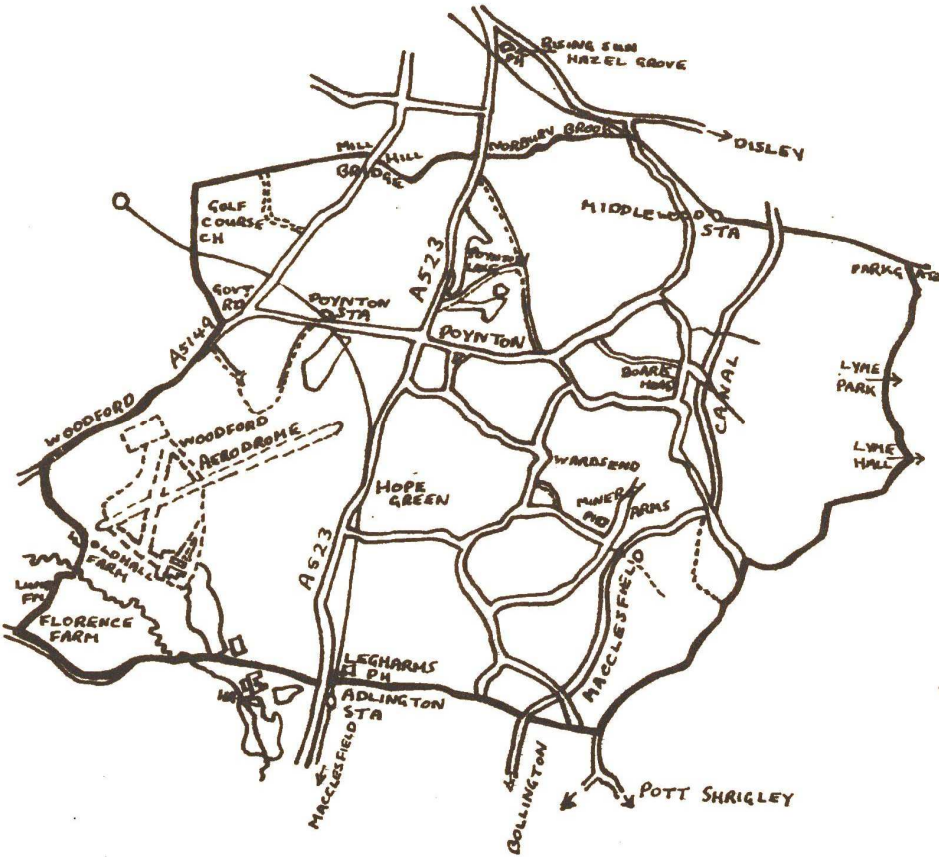
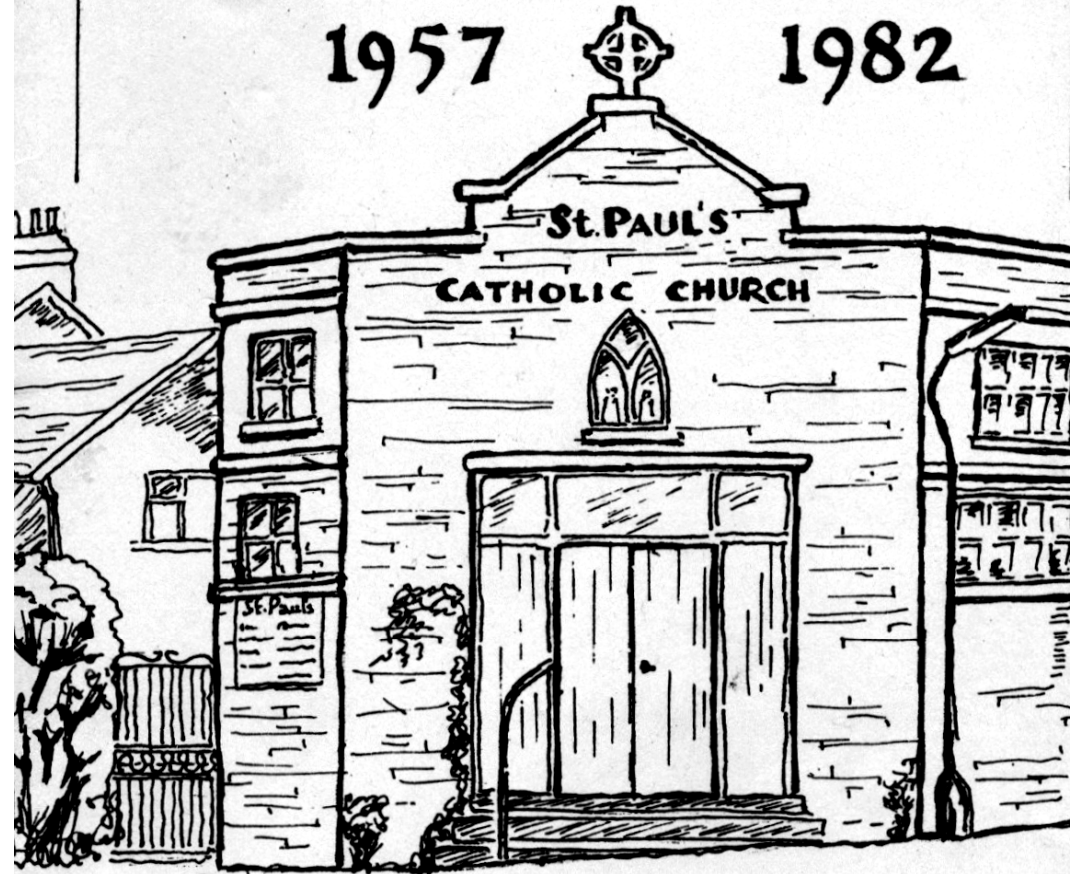


The Boundaries of St. Paul's Parish, Poynton



Version 2

1957  1982



SILVER JUBILEE

The Story of St. Pauls Poynton

by
Wilfred Jukka
S.M.M.

September
1957

To commemorate
the **SILVER JUBILEE**
of the Erection
of St. Pauls
as a **Parish.**

September
1982

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the early history of Poynton and promised to find further information and even some old photos. Then on 3 August I eventually was able to track down the mysterious Salesian Priest who, I was told, knew a lot about the evacuee children in Poynton. Through him I realised for the first time that the Story of St Paul’s Church, as opposed to that of the Parish, begins not in Hazel Grove, as I had always imagined, but in Sacred Heart, Gorton. Not long afterwards, via Mrs Isherwood. and Miss Kathleen Morris, who as a child had been evacuated here, I met Mrs Derbyshire an evacuee-teacher with the Gorton children. Then the White family who lived in the Shop told me their story, and finally Fr Hurley wrote and spoke on the phone about his story.

Through these lucky breaks and through some reading and much work I was able to piece this Story together. What I have written here is chiefly important because it is just in time to save at least some of the Story, some that would soon have been lost for ever. I am sure that there are many flaws and. there are possibly some errors in what I have written, but the basic story is, I think, true. If any reader spots a mistake or notices an omission I hope he or she will let me know. I am opening a special file entitled, “The History of St Paul’s.” In it there will be, besides this “Story”, all the corrections I hope it will evoke. This can only be the beginning. The next time it is written it should be much improved, but that depends on you, the readers !

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INTRODUCTION

The Parish of St. Paul's, Poynton, takes in the whole of Poynton-with-Worth and Higher Poynton, as well as those parts of Woodford and Adlington which are indicated on the map found on the inside cover of this book. The map is based on the document sent by Bishop Murphy to Fr. Lynch on 15th. February 1959, now in the Presbytery Files. It is a parish of the Catholic Church, and what follows, deals not with the whole history of the district, but only with those details in it that are linked closely with the Catholic Faith and its adherents in this area. The "story", incomplete and unscholarly, is written to mark the Silver Jubilee of the foundation of St. Paul's Parish in September 1957.

ITS ANCIENT CONTEXT... TILL 1939

From ancient times until the beginning of the nineteenth century there were, as far as is known, very few people living in this district. It was formed part of the Forest of Macclesfield. This means that long ago it was doubtless thickly wooded, but for many centuries during the Middle Ages it consisted mainly of rough pasture land interspersed with frequent trees. It was used mainly for hunting by the privileged few who owned the land. These built themselves splendid residences with lovely parks and they had large numbers of retainers to act as servants and to look after their property.

It is believed that there are traces of an old Roman road under the present Meadway Estate, but what is more certain is that, from early Roman times when the Christian Faith first came to these lands until the reformation, everybody in this whole area and in every other part of England was Catholic, except for the invading pagans, who eventually became Catholics too if they stayed long enough.

For that reason the most ancient church in this area is of great interest to us. It was Poynton Chapel which we know, from existing documents, was already here before the year 1312. It was situated near Poynton Pool quite close to the present junction of South Park Drive and Towers Road. It was small but beautiful, with lovely stained glass windows. It served the gentry and the ordinary people of Poynton, Worth and Woodford. It was dedicated to Our Lady and it remained a Catholic church till about 1600. It was rebuilt in 1789 and then dedicated to St. George. When the present church of St. George was built about half a mile away in 1858 the ancient chapel was pulled down. An interesting little fact is that the present Parish Church is called "St. Mary's" on the brass plate in its foundation stone, because of its link with the old chapel. Norbury Chapel which stood just outside the

THE EPILOGUE September 1982

The preceding pages really bring this "Story of St Paul's" to the end of what has actually happened and to what we hope will be the Silver Jubilee Celebrations on 12 September 1982.

At first we were going to have everything, the Mass and the Social events, in our School because of parking and catering. The Social celebrations will still be there, but not the spiritual celebrations. For the Social Mrs Enid. Parrott and Mrs Neta Redman, supported by many helpers, plan to give a free buffet to which everybody in the Parish is invited. This will be followed by a Concert, the centre-piece of which will be a short Musical about St Paul composed specially by our new Deputy-Head, Mr Ian Orry. The spiritual celebrations will be in Church, because as a result of this "Story" we now realise that the old Cinema-turned-Church is the heart and the centre of all this "Story of St Paul's" and that the Jubilee Mass just had to take place there. By that time we hope to have a double-glazed, sliding window looking down from the old Projection-room on to the main altar. The window will be a help to the Sunday-time children at the 10.30 Mass in the future and possibly at other Masses to parents with children. It will also be helpful if ever we have too many people to fit in our church. Mrs Drinkwater and Mrs Neate have promised to decorate the "Upper-room" for us, which is urgent after the extensive repairs it has recently undergone.

We are delighted to know that Bishop Gray will, on that day, be making his first visit to our Parish; and that Fr Hurley will also be here and, we hope, Fr Lynch, together with many priests from the Deanery; as well as Fr Cohn Doyle who is almost a native of Poynton and Fr Harry Stratton who is at least a co-opted member of our Parish. The new Provincial of the Montfort Fathers has promised to come, and we have invited the Salesian priests too. We hope especially that Fr Wrangham will be here, to revive his memories of the Evacuee days.

This is being written at the end of August '82. At the beginning of this month I knew hardly anything about the history of Poynton or about the Story of St Paul's. I had asked for information and photos both in Poynton Post and in our news-sheets, but the only significant response by the early days of August had come from Mrs Dolan. She had written some of her memories and found some of her photos. I was feeling stunned by the news that the relevant Notice Books in St Peter's were missing, and I was beginning to give up hope of finding anything worth while. Then I had a number of unexpected breaks. First, Mr Roy Dudley told me a lot about

The most outstanding event, of course, of 1982 was the visit to Great Britain by Pope John Paul II which took place at the end of May and the beginning of June. Before the great event there had of course been much preparation. In the parishes it was supposed to be mainly spiritual, and at St Paul's we took part in the monthly Deanery Masses held in different churches, in the Mission for and in the Family which meant the family using a special leaflet prepared by the Deanery together with St Luke's Gospel. Both this and the leaflets were given out free. Those of our Singing groups willing to take part in the practices were invited to join the Papal Choir for Heaton Park, and six of our parishioners were specially commissioned to give out Holy Communion on the great day. The Visit as a whole was a great success, but the local arrangements were less successful. Both the Choir members and the Extraordinary Ministers felt disappointed and frustrated, and yet-oddly enough-very glad that they had been present. To meet the high costs of the Visit every parish was told that it would have to provide a large sum of money. Ours was £1,200. Just before the Visit I sent a letter to every Catholic household in Poynton asking for their support to meet this demand, adding that I thought they would prefer a single big effort to a series of collections etc. The result was magnificent. Without any further pressure, quite voluntarily, people brought their offerings to the Presbytery. I had suggested £5 per family but had left them to decide whether that was too much or too little. In the event £808.54 was given, and a few weeks later a Coffee-morning in the Presbytery for the same cause brought in another £144.14.

Poynton boundary, close to the Brookside Garden Centre was never Catholic, being built only around 1600.

The will of Lawrence Warren who owned all Poynton and much of Stockport gives an interesting insight into the Catholicity of this district during the reign of Henry VIII. The will is dated 1529—Lawrence died the following year— and in it he bequeathed his soul to Almighty God, Our Lady St. Mary and all the blessed Company of Heaven, and he asks for thirty Masses to be offered immediately after his death and another five in honour of the Five Wounds. You really cannot get much more Catholic than that !

His descendants, however, eventually accepted the Protestant faith, though we do not know when. At the time of the Jacobite invasion of England in 1745 Bonnie Prince Charlie passed close to Poynton on his way to Macclesfield after the capture of Manchester and Stockport. It was then that the Warrens of Poynton together with all the Lords of Cheshire and Shropshire made the definitive decision to break finally with the “Old Faith” when they opted to support the Hanoverians. This meant that all their dependants became firmly Protestant, if they were not that before.

About 1550 Poynton Hall was built close to the Pool, though there may have been earlier buildings on the same site. It was replaced about 1750 by a much larger house, which in its turn was pulled down about 1830. No new hall took its place, but a large house was built between the two towers of the old entrance-gate, very near to Poynton Chapel. This new dwelling was aptly named “Poynton Towers” and it was still in existence well into this century. Just outside the Park entrance stood the Vicars House, on the Stockport side of the present “Bulls Head”, and almost touching it was a row of nineteen cottages for the workers attached to the Hall. They were built around 1700 and they were the original “Poynton”. The only road out of it was a track known as “Lane Ends” which later became Vicarage Lane and led direct to the Chester Road, now called Woodford Road, Poynton. The present road from the “Rising Sun” to Macclesfield was built as a Toll Road in 1762, mostly at the insistence of the inhabitants of Bullock Smithy as the present Hazel Grove was then called. Apparently the original “Hessell Grave” was a gravel quarry belonging to Mr. Hessell near High Lane.

The Warren Family were the Lords of Stockport, Poynton and other places from 1340 until the death of Elizabeth Harriet Warren, the childless wife of Viscount Bulkeley, in 1826. She bequeathed her Stockport and Poynton estates to the Vernon Family on the apparently

mistaken opinion that they were her blood relations. Her father Sir George Warren, had bought the Worth Estates in 1792 from the impoverished Downes Family for the sum of £27,000. It was a vast sum in those days, but it was a shrewd buy. Coal was the gold of the dawning Industrial Revolution, and Worth unlike Poynton was extremely rich in coal, good coal and relatively easy to mine. The Warren Family owned most of Stockport with all its mills and, at the start of the Steam Age, Sir George had foreseen the importance of having one's own supply of coal.. This brought great wealth to the family and then later to the Vernons when they succeeded to the estates in 1826. As new mines were opened more miners had to be found for them and these needed houses. The first miners cottages were built up Middlewood Road, near the new mines, and then more in Park Lane. When the first school was opened in 1845 Poynton Green had become the centre of the village in place of the few cottages at the Park Gates.

By then Poynton was becoming an important village. In the Middle Ages, Hepley and Lostock were little hamlets, but in the early nineteenth century they were swallowed up by the growing Poynton-with-Worth. By 1801 it all ready had 114 houses and 620 inhabitants. All through the nineteenth century it continued to grow as more mines were opened, and by 1901 there were 525 families and 2544 persons. The Village consisted of two main roads, London Road and Park Lane, but gradually all round these roads other houses were built, though right up to the last War there were lots of empty spaces, and even more recently there were crops growing and cows grazing on what are now established estates. Everything in the Village centred on what one writer described as the inexhaustible veins of the best coal. Thus Poynton never was a truly rural village. It came into existence as a mining village.

It is possible that an occasional Catholic lived in the area, but by and large Poynton was solidly Protestant. This was almost unique for an industrialised community in great Britain because all through the nineteenth century the poverty stricken, work hungry Irish had swarmed into all the heavy industries, and with them they brought the Catholic Faith. That this did not happen in Poynton, as it did in Stockport, Macclesfield and Bollington, can only have been the result of a set policy of not employing Catholics on the part of the Warren and Vernon families.

Mr. Roy Dudley who supplied much of the above information recalls his father saying that a Catholic lived and worked in Poynton in the early years of this century, but it was not until 1914 that the first known Catholic arrived, and by that time Lord Vernon had left. They were Thomas and

Bishop in Malawi presided at the Mass which was at 5p.m., and Fr Mathews, the Provincial of the Montfort Fathers, preached before a packed church, including ten other Concelebrants, thirteen of my relations and. Canon Lewis and his wife from St George's. Afterwards there was a free Buffet, with a glass of wine for adults and of orange-juice for children, in the Civic Hall. There was also a concert and then a Presentation of a Colour TV, a Stereo Radio-Cassette Player and about £300 for a future "Holiday-in-the-Sun." Altogether about six hundred came that night to the Civic Hall. The costs were met from a house-to-house collection that had. been made previously. There was a Bar, and Mr Lawrence Ford. who ran it provided much of the wine, as well as many of the drinks for the clergy. Because the decision to hold the Celebrations had been made late, it clashed a little with the Christmas Fair which took place the following Saturday and with the P T A Dance which had to be postponed till Saturday 19 December. Everybody however, especially myself, was glad and grateful for the Feast.

1982 opened with a new type of News-sheet, that of the Redemptorists' "Sunday Plus." It has our news printed on the other side. It is an experiment, and before the end of the year we shall decide whether it is worth continuing. This is a good opportunity to record the debt of gratitude we all owe to the many ladies who have typed and stencilled the news-sheets, both past and present. For the last few years Mrs Sandra Drinkwater, Mrs Winnie Westwood and Mrs Margaret Neate have taken turns each week to do it ... Excellently !

The news-sheet of 7 February 1982 announced the proposed re-organization of the Parish Council. This took place at the Annual General Meeting of the Parish on 10 March when it was decided that for the future there would be a small Guiding Committee of Four and many more representatives from the Parish. The Committee now consists of the Priest as Chairman, Mr Ball as Deputy, Mr Wilson as Treasurer and Mrs Westwood as Secretary. Every significant grouping in the Parish is to have a representative on the Council, and if he or she cannot be present they should send a substitute from their group. At present there are fifteen such groups, and in future there will be five meetings a year.

At the end of March '82 the partition in the Confessional was given an opening so that penitents, if they so wish, may make their Confession seated and face to face with the priest. It is beginning to be popular, with scarcely a word said by me, especially with those wishing to talk about some spiritual problem.

famous Paul, who takes part in a Folk Group Mass once a month. They each play at the 10.30 Mass once a month, with a small group of singers to lead the congregation. Mrs Julie Johnson and Mr Andrew Neate normally guide the singing.

On 7 June 1981 St Paul's Sharing Group came into existence. It is a society without rules, obligations, meetings or checks, and yet it works. On one Sunday a month after each Mass, one of the four members of the Guiding Committee offers to anybody willing to take it a letter with a little envelope attached. The following month they do the same and also accept the envelopes that are returned to them. The idea is that people put into the envelope some money for the Third World, saved through some act of penance, preferably on a Friday. On the first anniversary of collecting the envelopes we had already sent just over £1,000 to Mother Teresa and £275 to Poland, all given through our Sharing Group envelopes. At present we are saving in this way to help the People of Lebanon.

On 15 September 1981 one of my dreams came true when a group of ladies who had met in School to discuss the possibility of starting a Ladies' Group decided to start there and then by electing a committee of six to organize meetings etc. The first of these took place on 29 September, and since then they have met every two weeks of term-time normally with a guest-speaker. The numbers have not increased dramatically, but those in it want very much to make it succeed ... as I do !

During most of 1981 and now into '82 we have been trying to get a real Parish Meeting-room. The school, even with its hall, only partially fulfils our needs. Because we own some of the School-grounds and for other reasons, we decided that would be the best place. A brick building, however, would cost about £70,000, and so we were forced to think of a pre-fab type. We nearly bought one for £24,000, but then had doubts about the guarantee-worthiness of the firm. Eventually we were advised to try to get one of the many such buildings that the Education Authorities have on their hands because of falling numbers. At present we are negotiating with various Authorities and hope to get something in the near future. We already have the necessary permissions from the Diocese and the local Education Authority, as well as outline-planning permission. We even have Mr Martin Hertzog all lined up to collect and, rebuild one as soon as it is available.

On Sunday 6 December 1981 there were great celebrations of the Ruby Jubilee of my Ordination to the Priesthood on 8 December 1941. The idea was not mine, it came from Pat Hardy, aided and abetted by Tom Ball and the members of the Social Committee. Bishop Hardman who used to be my

Teresa Whitehead who in that year moved into 64 Park Lane with their three children. Three more were later born to them in Poynton. The children attended Poynton Green School, now the Social Centre in Park Lane, and for a time the family attended services in the Parish Church on the assumption that it was the nearest thing they could find to a Catholic Church. In those days Poynton was in the Catholic parish of Edgeley, Stockport, though there was a chapel-of-ease in Commercial Road, Hazel Grove, which the Whiteheads do not seem to have known about.

In 1924, however, Mrs Whitehead – by then a widow, was told of the new parish of St Peter's that had started in Hazel Grove the preceding year, with Father Kirby the first Parish Priest. About the same time she discovered another Catholic in Poynton, Mrs Massey who lived in Clumber Road just opposite the old cinema. Between them they arranged with Mr Hallworth who owned a taxi to take the two ladies and the five remaining children to the 8 a.m. Mass in St Peter's, Commercial Road, every Sunday morning. In 1931 the new church of St Peter's in Green Lane was opened by Fr Kelly who had succeeded Father Kirby. By then the taxi owner was using a converted army lorry as a bus to take them all to Mass and the children to Sunday School. In 1934 Mrs Whitehead achieved her long cherished ambition when she moved into a house near the Catholic Church in Hazel Grove. The above information was given in a letter from one of her daughters now living in Dublin. She added that all the Whitehead children married Catholics and that all their children and grand-children are Catholics. She also mentioned that before they left Poynton two other Catholics had come there, Mrs Johnston and Mrs Hargreaves, but the writer could not find out anything about them.

However he does know another Catholic who arrived in Poynton in 1931. She is Mrs Agnes Clayton who now lives at 51 Copperfield Road. Her first house here was one of the nineteen cottages at the end of Vicarage Lane, and she stayed there until they were all pulled down in 1937. In 1932 Mr and Mrs Talbot came to Wayside Drive with their two sons, and Mrs Talbot is still living in the same house. The following year the Molloy family moved into Woodford Road, Poynton and they too still live there.

By 1934 the unthinkable had happened. The "inexhaustible Poynton coal" had run out and the mines were closed. In that same year the first of the Quinn sisters from Cleaton Moor in Cumbria came to Poynton. She was Mrs Williamson who until 1953 lived in 17 Bulkeley Road. There over the next few years she received three more of her sisters, and two of them, Mrs Lloyd and Mrs Bennett, are still with us. A few more Catholics

who have since died or left the district also lived in or around Poynton in those pre-War years but the total number, including the lapsed was probably less than thirty. They all formed part of the parish of St Peter's Hazel Grove, and by 1936 Fr Kelly, the Parish Priest, felt he must do something for the Catholics in Poynton.

On Easter Sunday that year Mass was said for the first time there in the home of Mrs Crush who lived in 82 Chester Road. The following Easter Sunday and again later in that year of 1937 Mass was said in the "Kindergarten" at 62 Chester Road. Soon afterwards Fr Kelly hired a bus from Swan's Chip Shop in Park Lane to take the Catholics to the 8 a.m. Mass every Sunday at St Peters. This however was not very successful. It was very early, especially for those Catholics who had to walk a long way before getting on the bus. Fr Kelly decided to rent the "Corner Café", now the Post Office, for Mass every Sunday. This went on for about eighteen months. Sometimes as many as forty would be present at the Café-Mass, but mostly there would be far less.

She has made herself responsible for doing all the lino and. parquet flooring two or three times a year in the Church and Presbytery ever since.

This seems an obvious place to mention that gallant band of ladies who take weekly turns to clean the Church on a voluntary basis. I think this goes back to the origin of the Church in 1941, probably even to the time of the evacuees. This "Story of St Paul's" would be very incomplete without an expression of our gratitude to them all, past and present. The same is also true of those ladies, and even an occasional man, who also take weekly turns to do the Church flowers, again voluntarily. Not only do they arrange the flowers, they also provide them; and over the last few years everybody has noticed the constant improvement in their arrangement techniques. Ever since my arrival Mrs Sheila Sugden has organized the rota for the Church cleaning and the flowers.

This is also an obvious place to think of those ladies, past and present, who have worked in the Presbytery, very especially the housekeepers. Miss Molly Connolly looked after Fr Lynch when he was in Poynton and then until her death a short time ago. Fr Hurley had Miss Joan Seville till her death in 1963. Not only was she his housekeeper, she also supported him in many of the parish activities, not least in running the Agnesians. Miss Tessa Stubbs was his housekeeper from 1965 till her death in 1980. I have had Mrs Leech full-time and Mrs Anderson part-time, though neither were involved in parish activities. For the last few years Mrs Pat Hardy has acted as housekeeper for me, as well as doing a full-time nursing job and running her own house in the Parklands Estate. On top of that she is involved in many parish activities and money-raising schemes; and she has shown a remarkable flair for thinking up new ideas and organizing their operational details. Much of what follows now came from that flair of hers.

1981 saw the start of several new ventures, so much so that we made a rule that nothing may take place unless it has been written in the Parish Diary or Planner so that people can check what is already arranged before fixing another meeting. Life was getting impossible.

On 9 February 1981 we had our first meeting of the new Discussion Group. This started as a spin-off from a series of Lenten Talks I gave in 1980. The Discussion takes place once a month, and seems to be doing a lot of good to those who attend. Almost at the same time we reorganized the Church Music. Till then Mrs Dolan had been our sole organist. Now we have her and we also have Mr Peter Doyle on the harmonium, Mrs Margaret Meech on the piano, and Mr Bob McCartney, a cousin of the

successful, and so at the end of 1981 we decided on the radical solution of building a new sloping roof over each of the flat-roofs. This involved rebuilding the parapets and much of the wall over the front entrance to the Church. The whole job, completed in the Spring of '82, cost £4,000. The white lettering which is the distinctive sign of our church, had first been put up in July '78 to let people know where our church was. It had to be repaired and re-fitted after the roof job was finished. The Presbytery too had needed repairs, especially on its numerous flat-roofs, which altogether had cost several thousand pounds. It is a dear job running a parish !

In June 1980 the Church was decorated. There was then an immediate outcry for a red carpet to go with the red paintwork behind the Tabernacle. This, in its turn, induced Miss Hilary Jarvis, assisted by her Mother and Aunt, to make new red covers for the altar, kneelers and stools. In August 1980 she also presented us with a beautiful white Mass vestment she had made, and then for Easter 1981 she made all the present white albs for the Servers, to replace their old and tatty cassocks and surplices. About the same time Mr Tony Bowers made for us the present altar candlesticks. For that same Easter we also had new sanctuary furniture, a new lectern (given in memory of Miss Stubbs), new stools (in memory of Mr Bower's sister and the Neate's relations) and a new hymn-board.

All the sanctuary furniture, including the kneelers already there, were treated so that they all match the Baptismal Font which was then placed, for the first time, in the sanctuary. This matching treatment was donated in memory of Claude Westwood by his wife.

As a result of all these improvements there was mounting pressure to cover the floor-boards under the benches, that till then had always remained bare. At first we decided to carpet the aisles and put lino under the benches, but this provoked much discussion. After a lot of consultation, especially with our church-cleaners, the Parish Council decided that we would make do with the lino on the aisles and put new lino under the benches. The money saved through not buying carpets would be sent to help the Third World. In February 1981 the present red lino was laid, and soon afterwards we sent the money to the Third World, £400 to Mother Teresa of Calcutta and £400 to CAFOD. For many months afterwards we tried to rid the lino in the aisles of the polish and dirt that had accumulated there over a period of many years, but in vain. Eventually Mr David Hunt brought a big industrial sanding machine and he himself used it to scrape the lino. Afterwards he had to reseal the lino so that it would take polish. Mrs Barbara Downs, our industrious and popular School-caretaker, then worked hard on it, and gradually she brought it to the brilliant polish it has today.

THE CINEMA CHURCH 1939—1941

The first cinema in Poynton had been opened in 1922. It was built by Mr Bailey on land that until then had been an orchard. It was situated at the junction of Clumber Road and the "new" Bulkeley Road opened in 1902. In 1923 Mr Bailey constructed a small cottage next to the cinema with a shop attached to provide his patrons with sweets and tobacco. Together and enlarged they now form the Presbytery. The newly built house and shop were bought by Mr and Mrs Casemore who stayed there until 1936. In that year they rented the premises to Mr and Mrs White who lived there till Mrs Casemore sold it to Fr Hurley in 1963. Mr and Mrs White then moved to 16 Brookside Avenue where they still live, while Mrs Casemore lives in Shrigley Road. The cinema proved so popular and profitable that Mr Bailey decided about 1937 to build a bigger and better one on London Road which he called the "Brookfield", and is now the garage of the same name.

As far as the writer can judge, when the cinema became vacant it does not seem that Fr Kelly or anybody seriously considered turning it into a church. The Catholics were so few and cinemas, especially the early cinemas, are notoriously difficult to convert into anything. Fr Kelly stayed in St Peters until 1946 when he became Parish Priest of St Werburgh's, Birkenhead where, as Canon, he died in 1972. Like all Parish Priests of the time he must have written his weekly notices in what we called "The Notice Book". These books were usually the main source of information concerning the past history of the parish. Unfortunately all the Notice Books of St. Peter's between the years of 1936 till about 1950 are missing, and this is a grievous loss for the history of St. Paul's Poynton. They must contain many things of interest to us and from them we would be better able to reconstruct exactly what happened here in those vital years of our history. What follows is the story as far as the writer can reconstruct it from some quotations, bills and letters that Fr Peters, the present Parish Priest of Hazel Grove, found for him; from the memories of Fr Wrangham, a Salesian priest now living at their College in Pott Shrigley who came from there to say Mass for the evacuee children in Poynton; and from the memories of Mrs Derbyshire who, as Miss Margaret Egan, was one of the teachers with the evacuees.

On the morning of Friday, 1 September 1939, two days before the outbreak of war, six teachers and about two hundred children from Sacred Heart School, Gorton, Manchester, met at Belle Vue Station at 5 a.m. for an unknown evacuation centre. The same thing was happening all over the

country, though perhaps at a more reasonable time and perhaps with some knowledge of where they were going to. One of the six teachers Mrs Monica Brennan, with the help of her teacher husband who was also being evacuated, though to a different place, had spent all the preceding days closing up their home in preparation for an indefinite absence. On the morning of 1 September she said goodbye to her husband and turned up with the rest at Belle Vue Station. At 7 a.m. teachers and children were deposited at Poynton Station which was about 100 yards from the Brennan home at 80 Chester Road. That same lady had made history of another kind a few years earlier when she had contested in the civil courts the then prevalent custom of dismissing a lady teacher on her marriage. She won her case against the managers of Sacred Heart School, which was why she was with the evacuees that morning. She stayed in Poynton till her death there in 1960.

The evacuees were all given food in a nearby hall and the rest of the day was spent trying to get the children and teachers fixed up with Poynton families willing to take them. About fifty boys and one teacher went to the Salesian College and the rest eventually found accommodation in Poynton-with-Worth.

Mr Hughes, the Headmaster, was a very worried man; and one of his big worries was how he was going to get his teachers and children to Sunday Mass in a place that had no Catholic Church. We can presume that he contacted his own priest in Gorton and also the local Parish Priest in Hazel Grove. We know for certain that he eventually contacted the Salesians in Pott Shrigley to say that he had managed to hire a disused cinema and would they provide a priest to say Mass for them. On either the first or second Sunday after their arrival the Salesians sent Father Slyth to say Mass for the Poynton evacuees and he did the same for the next one or two Sundays. Then Fr Wrangham took over the task and went every Sunday for nearly two years. Mr Hughes would collect and bring him back by car, and Mrs Massey from Clumber Road would give him his breakfast. In those days one "fasted from midnight" before going to Communion.

On Saturday, 2 September 1939, the mothers and children under five arrived in Poynton from the Sacred Heart Parish of Gorton, and these too were given lodgings in the village. Most of them, however, did not stay long, partly because of family reasons and partly because of the problems caused by having to share the kitchen and all the other facilities with the "lady-of-the-house". In those days Poynton was, as it had been for the preceding century, basically a mining village and the vast majority of the people were poor, living in fairly primitive conditions. Most of the evacuee

the Congress itself. Afterwards he tried hard to get the Congress findings discussed and acted upon at Deanery level.

Over the years there had been various attempts at starting something for the Youth. Both Fr Lynch and Fr Hurley had tried, and in March 1979 Mr John Carter and Mr Andrew Neate, as an offshoot of their S V P activities started a Youth Group for between the ages of eleven and fourteen. Later Mr Paul Varetto joined them. The Group met every second Sunday, at first in homes, then in the School-hall, but always as a Church-group. It was very successful and popular, and it was with regret that we saw it stop at the beginning of 1982 because of the difficulties that had arisen. However, by then there were other possibilities. St Paul's Brownies had their first meeting in January 1980 under the leadership of Mrs Joan Dawson, a mother of five young children, with Mrs Julie Johnson as her Deputy. Soon afterwards, when the Dawson family moved, Mrs Johnson took over the Brownies who have gone from strength to strength ever since. The Cubs started in the September of that same year with Mrs Liz Healey, supported by her husband, in charge until June 1982 when Liz's failing health forced her reluctantly to resign. One of our ex-Altar Servers, Mr Paul Whitehurst will, we hope soon replace her. Mr Peter Dugdale started the Scouts on 12 November 1981, but so far we have been unable to find a leader for the Guides we want to start. Both the Cubs and Scouts are very popular and successful, thanks mainly to the devotion of their leaders and helpers.

Since 1974 we have had two Episcopal Visitations, The first in July 1977 was by Bishop Brewer who confirmed forty five children; and the second was when Bishop Grasar confirmed fifty five children on 29 June 1980. It was sad to think that it would be his last visit here as Bishop. He had recently resigned for health reasons. For me personally it was a great blow, because I had known him well since our student-days in Rome before the War, and it was he who had invited me to Poynton. The blow was, however, softened to a certain degree when soon afterwards we heard that Bishop Gray was to succeed him. I had worked in his district of the Liverpool diocese for some years before coming to Poynton, and I liked him very much.

Repair work never ceases on our parish property. About 1976 a massive job of strengthening the church-foundations became necessary because of the mine-shafts underneath. It cost nearly £3,000. Soon afterwards we had bad leaks in the old Projection-room. It has two small flat-roofs, one at either end, and these have been a source of constant trouble. Twice since 1975 we have had costly work done that was not

build a school-hall, another classroom and some toilets, and also to complete the field-drainage and landscaping. There were still many formalities to go through, but eventually the work was completed for the beginning of September 1979 at a cost of about £70,000, of which we had to find about £12,000. These extensions have been a great boon, especially the hall which we also use for social events. Many people worked hard to get the necessary permission to build, but none harder than Mr John McNamara of Disley who was the parents' representative on our School's Board of Managers till November, 1979.

Another two of St Paul's customs started around this time. The first was the much loved Christmas Crib and Easter Tableau in the Presbytery porch. Mrs Anne Turnbull, aided by her husband Gerard, made all the figures, and ever since Christmas 1978 they have faithfully and tastefully installed and dismantled them each time. Mr Neil Tavenor put in the fluorescent lighting which has its own automatic timing so that the figures can fulfil their purpose of reminding the passers-by at night as well as during the day of the true meaning of Christmas and Easter. The lighting is also used on occasion for more mundane purposes, such as advertising Fairs and the like.

The second custom was the use of a P A system to play cassette-hymns in Church. Mr Bill Broadbent, who was the Head of Sharpe UK, donated it to us in July 1979. He died of leukaemia at the age of fifty on 5 June 1981. Singing via cassettes, in spite of some initial doubts, has now become an accepted part of our life. We find them particularly useful to sustain weak singing and also to teach new hymns. They are used at every 8.30 and 6 o'clock Mass on Sundays, and occasionally at other times. More recently we have also started to use the P A system for public speaking, especially by children, and by all at the 10.30 Mass.

The first National Congress in England took place in Liverpool in May 1980, but all during the preceding year it was being prepared. At St Paul's we eventually settled for Parish-questionnaires which were compiled by a small group of parishioners together with a pencil these were given out at roughly two monthly intervals at the end of every Mass on one Sunday, and everybody over sixteen was asked to stay after Mass to answer the twenty or so questions (to find time for this the sermon had been reduced to two minutes). In this way we managed to get the views of something like 85% of the adults present at Mass, views that were all the more frank for being anonymous. The results of the questionnaires and of other meetings were eventually sent to the Congress Centre and Mr Tom Ball represented the Catholics of Poynton adequately and those of Whaley Bridge nominally at

children stayed however, though there was always a thin trickle of them going home for good, especially when the expected blitzes and bombing failed to materialise for the first year of "the phoney war", as the Americans called it. Clumber House in Dickens Lane was the official Sick Bay for all the evacuees during the whole of their stay in Poynton.

At first the Sunday Mass in the old cinema seems to have been exclusively for the evacuees and their relations. The building which was only rented, was exactly as it had always been, except for the altar erected in front of the screen. The aisles sloped sharply and the seats, to the delight of the children, tipped up and were "plush". There were toilets at the back, which was another novelty for children at Sunday Mass.

Schooling too had its problems. At that time the Vernon School was the only one in Poynton. From September 1939 until about the end of May '40 it was a State school in the morning and a Catholic school in an extended afternoon for one week, and then the following week the morning was for the Catholics and the afternoons for the Poynton children. The teachers from both schools were expected to fill in the missing school-hours each day by taking their children for games, nature walks etc. The evacuee children who had fared best were those who had been sent to the Salesians. There they had excellent facilities and, as one teacher put it, they were given "a Public School education all the time they were there."

By May 1940 there were only about one hundred evacuee children left in Poynton, and so it was decided to turn the Methodist Hall in Park Lane into a Catholic school with three or four teachers. In this way both schools were able to revert to normal school hours. Things remained like that for the next eighteen months, with the trickle returning home for good steadily eroding the number of evacuees left here. By the end of 1941 they were so few that the Manchester Authorities, who had by that time erected air-raid shelters in all their schools, decided it was time to open them properly. Those children whose parents wanted them to stay "on evacuation" were reorganised, and the rest went back home. In Poynton about thirty five children stayed, and Mrs Brennan was given a classroom in the Vernon School for the rest of the War. Many of the boys with the Salesians also elected to stay, and some of them still go back there to visit the place.

It is possible that the Corner Cafe Mass continued for a time after the arrival of the evacuees, but early in 1940 Fr Kelly started negotiating the purchase, of the old cinema. A letter dated 21 Feb 1940 from an architect

named Mr Reynolds, whose widow is now living in 50 Brookfield Ave, assured the priest that the building was in a relatively satisfactory condition. By then, however, it looked and felt draughty and dilapidated. Fr Wrangham recalls the terrible winter of 1939/'40 and how one Sunday he had to walk all the way to Poynton for Mass because of the ice and snow. When he arrived he found that nobody thought he would make it, and so he finished by saying Mass for two ladies! While the cinema was rented Mr Bailey was responsible for providing central heating, but in the great freeze-up of 1940 all the radiators burst. Both Fr Wrangham and Mrs Dolan tell of the congregation crouched freezing in the unheated chapel while Mass was said, with their feet on two inches of solid ice and the sloping aisles making a death-trap for the elderly and a Heaven-sent slide for the evacuee children.

The central heating, was never repaired and the heating for many winter weeks was a single tiny oil-stove brought by one of the congregation. It was this state of affairs that induced Fr Kelly to make heating one of his top priorities for the old cinema, even before he actually bought it. In March 1940 the Stockport Gas Works quoted £71-18-0 for supplying and fitting twelve gas radiators in satin-bronze finish, with a 10% reduction if a local contractor fitted them. Mr Leonard Martin who with his wife lived in Bridle Road, Woodford, fitted them and thus brought the price down to £64-14-8. The installation of the "hanging gas heaters", as Fr Hurley described them, was greeted with great relief, even if their appearance left much to be desired.

In May 1940 "the freehold premises known as The Old Cinema Poynton" was purchased by Fr Kelly for £525, and the solicitors fees (Hoskins of Liverpool who are still our solicitors) were £12-5-6. In July 1940 the building was insured for £500 (In 1982 it was insured for £150,000!) and the decision was made to divide the old cinema in two, the front part to be the church and the rear end to be a Parish-hall. In November 1940 estimates for this work were accepted from Messrs Peace & Norquoys of Ancoats, Manchester for £1,385. A first payment of £450 was made in March 1941, a second for £950 in December of that year. and the final payment of £232 in October 1942, bringing the total cost of converting the cinema into a church and hall to £1,653. It was a vast amount for those days when the average labourer was earning about £3 a week and the return-fare by the 20 Bus from Poynton to Manchester was 10d (4p), but it ensured that the Catholics in Poynton not only had a church of their own for the first time since the Reformation, they had a hall of their own as well.

young babies to meet each week in the morning time. Sometimes as many as twelve mothers tuned up, but often far less, and eventually in 1981 it too ceased to function, due to lack of support.

At the end of May we held an Afternoon of Charismatic Renewal, led by Fr St John and Sister Rosemary from Loreto Convent. As a result of this we started the first of what turned out to be a series of prayer-groups. None of them proved to be very popular but since they obviously cater for the needs of some we have always encouraged anybody willing to try. At present there is a small group of ladies who meet in the morning. On two occasions we also tried 'Healing Services'. The first was a great success, but hardly anybody turned up for the second, and we have not tried it again since.

In October 1977 the first Parish Mission in the history of St Paul's was given by Fr Jim Carroll O M I for twelve days. He worked very hard and it was very successful. Five years later, at the beginning of July this year, Fr Conor Harper S J, whose sister Mrs Joan Dyson lives in the parish, gave the second mission. It was less well. attended, due perhaps to the holiday season, but it too produced effects of grace.

Even before I came to Poynton I had felt that Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion were essential in a single-priest parish for when he is sick or away. We had, however, to wait till 11 December 1977 before we got our first. He was Mr Tony Bowers who was commissioned by the Dean, Fr Mooney, during the 10.30 Mass that day. For the next two and a half years he was my indispensable helper both as regards Holy Communion and also as regards the endless D I Y jobs he did about the Church and Presbytery. Eventually we decided we needed more Extraordinary Ministers, and on 23 April 1981 Mrs Marie Worswick and Mrs Vana Isherwood were commissioned by the new Dean, Fr Davenport. Shortly afterwards, in May 1982, he also commissioned Mrs Margaret Neate. These Extraordinary Ministers were accepted by the Parish without the slightest problem, and now they are simply part of the scene.

On 19 December 1977 Mrs Vanda Isherwood. was appointed Headmistress of our School to replace, on 1 April 1978, Mrs Hawkins who had accepted the headship of a large State school in Bredbury. Mrs Isherwood proved to be a most successful Head, and being herself actively involved in the life of the Parish she did much to integrate fully the School and its activities into the mainstream of parish-life where it belongs. Within a few days of her appointment we received the news we had hoped for, prayed for, worked for, made ourselves nuisances for, over several years - the news that the Education Authorities were going to allow us to

years it has done a great deal for the School and gradually it has become more and more a part of parish-life.

The Parish Council branched out into several committees, but most of them were either for temporary needs or else they failed to take off. However, some of their initiatives have blossomed into lasting features. One such is the Estate and Management Committee which, under Mr Mulroy has been responsible for the property belonging to the Parish. Another is the Social Committee. Ever since 1941 there had been various groups who worked hard to promote social events. All such activities were merged into the work of the Social Committee, under the wing of the Parish Council. From 1975 Mrs Young and her group of helpers continued what they had already been doing, then with the departure of the Young family to Scotland in 1976 Mrs Enid Parrott, Mrs Neta Redman and Mrs Vanda Isherwood took over this charge, to be joined soon after by Mr Tom Ball. They have done and are still doing great work for the Parish, both socially and financially, raising for the last few years about £1,000 annually.

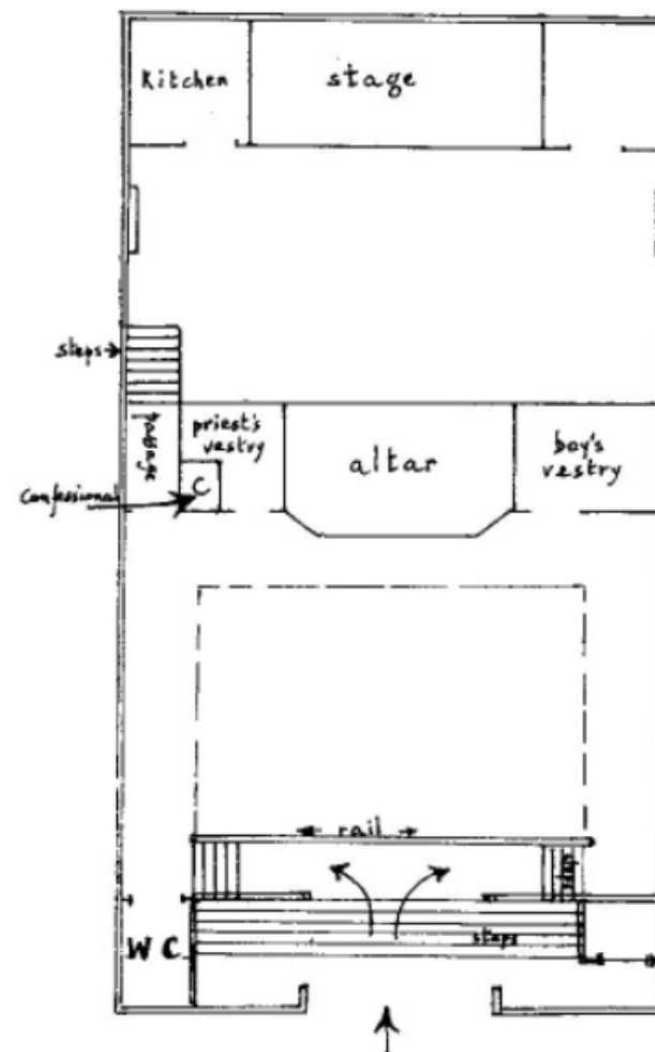
Two of the now familiar customs of St Paul's started in 1976. Encouraged by the Parish Council's Liturgy Group I began going straight from the altar after the Sunday Masses, still in vestments so as not to miss those leaving early, to greet the people as they left church. It started off as a Lenten penance but turned out to be a most enjoyable weekly encounter.

The other custom was "Sunday-time". We all felt that the readings and sermon did nothing for very young children, and so were delighted when on 28 March '76 Mrs Barbara Goldney with other ladies started taking turns each week to take children aged about six to the 'upper-room' (the old Projection-room) for their own service of prayers, stories and hymns during the first part of the 10.30 Mass. Later Mrs Jeannie Bratton reorganized the scheme to cater for children between the ages of three and seven. At the end of their little service and before going to their parents, these now join the Offertory Procession and bring to the Priest the work they have done while upstairs.

St Paul's S V P was started in November 1976 by Mr Hugh Gallacher who lived just outside the parish boundary. It catered for the sick and lonely as well as for the poor, and it did good work for many years. It went into temporary suspension at the end of 1961 and so far has not been restarted. One of its last acts had been to install the iron rail on the church steps. This was a gift from Mr and Mrs Neate who were members of the group. A few months after the start of the S V P, in February 1977 Mrs Birtwhistle launched "Meeting Point" as an opportunity for mothers with

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PLAN OF CHURCH AND HALL AFTER 1941.



THE CHAPEL-OF-EASE 1941 - 1957

On P 13 opposite there is a plan, supplied by Mrs Dolan, of the Church and Hall as they were at the end of 1941 and as they remained, with slight changes made by Fr Lynch in 1958, until Fr Hurley made the whole building into a church in 1965. The floor-level of the church was about four feet higher than that of the hall, with steps connecting the two. In the church-porch there were more steps going up to the doors leading into the "Standing-room" of the old cinema, with a wooden rail separating it from the church and with more steps going down to the floor of the chapel. There were the old emergency exits on either side of the hall, one of which was later transformed into the present side-door giving access to the Presbytery-yard. The original exits, however, went right to the ground, without any of the present steps. These two exit-doors, besides giving access to the hall, were also used whenever there was a Church procession. It left the Church through the front door, went along Clumber Road, across the Hall through the exit doors, then back along the side of Bulkeley Road into the church.

The tip-up cinema seats which by 1940 were in a poor condition were replaced by old iron and wood benches bought for £10 from Macclesfield District Bank as early as April 1940. All this makes one fairly certain that from the beginning of 1940, if not from September 1939, Fr Kelly was completely responsible for everything that went on in the old cinema, including the Mass for the evacuees.

A receipt for six shillings for taking Fr Kelly from Hazel Grove to Poynton makes it quite certain that the first Mass in the reconstructed chapel was said by Fr Kelly himself on the 9 November 1941, and that from then on the priests from St Peter's were responsible for the Sunday Mass until a resident priest was named in 1957. By the end of 1941 the number of Catholics in Poynton had increased. Not only were some of the children, teachers and grownups from Gorton still there, numbering perhaps about fifty in all, but by then other Catholics had Come, attracted partly at least by the relative safety from the by then increasingly frequent and ferocious bombing. This last triggered off new evacuations, but never on the scale of 1939 and never again involving other Catholic schools in Poynton.

Hardly had the main body of evacuees gone when another invasion of Catholics descended on Poynton. This came as a result of U S A involvement in the War from December 1941 onwards. Within the first year or so American forces were camped in Poynton, and many of them were not only Catholics, but flamboyantly so. The first big American camp

and provides us with invaluable help. In 1974 he discovered that extensive repairs were needed which, for financial reasons, had to be spaced out over several years. However, the urgent ones had to be tackled immediately, and these included replacing most of the flooring in the front lounge because of dry rot and decorating the whole house. The total bill for this work came to nearly £2,000. A lot of work had to be done too in the sacristies which was undertaken by Mrs Ronnie Ryder and some helpers. She has continued ever since to take charge of the Priest's sacristy which is as well kept as any convent sacristy was in the past !

One of the first objectives of the new Parish Priest was to try to get the parishioners actively involved in the running of "their own" parish. For this two general meetings of the Parish were held in the Methodist Hall in Clumber Road, kindly lent to us for that purpose, on 21 May and 25 November 1974. As a result of those meetings we formed St Paul's Parish Council which has flourished ever since. The first chairman was Mr Tom Young, who was replaced by Mr Bernard Isherwood, who in turn was replaced by Mr Tom Ball. Linked with the Parish Council was the nomination by Fr Jukka of a Parish Treasurer who looks after all the financial books and accounts of the Parish and who yearly submits to the Bishop the annual accounts. The Parish Treasurer is always an officer on the Parish Council. The first was Mr Lawrence O'Haire, followed by Mr Stan Redman, Mr Leo Turnbull and then Mr Tony Wilson who holds the post at present. The Parish Priest is automatically the President of the Parish Council which in its Constitution exists to advise and help him, but not to take over from him in any sense. The Constitutions for the Parish Council were approved at a General Meeting of the Parish held in St George's Hall on 26 February 1975 and on that day it started to exist officially.

For the Holy Week Ceremonies of 1975 the altar rails were removed to give more room and a better view. As a result of this some thought we should get rid of them permanently, and so a few weeks later we held a referendum as the people were leaving the Masses one Sunday. A substantial majority were in favour of doing without them. They were later sold for £40 to a couple from Wythenshawe.

In that same month of May we had for the first time a "Family Mass", with Folk hymns and sometimes guitars. Mrs Eileen Varetto started this and she kept it going for several years.

St Paul's P T A started in May 1975. The Headmistress's original idea had been to have a group of parents who would help the school financially through social activities, but I felt it should be a proper P T A. Over the

THE CONTINUING PROCESS 1974 – 1982.

Fr Hurley left Poynton on Wednesday 1 May 1974, and that same morning - just before his departure - his successor arrived. They had, of course, met a few times already to arrange the take-over. The new priest was, and still is, Fr Wilfred Jukka who belongs to the Society of Mary and Montfort (SMM) and is on loan to the Shrewsbury diocese. The title for this concluding chapter was chosen because he believes that his main task is to continue and, if possible, to develop what Fr Lynch and especially Fr Hurley had started. He is also “the writer” mentioned so often in these pages. Now that we have reached his term of office that title seems increasingly unnatural because so anonymous. Hence in the following pages it will be dropped in favour of “We and Our”, “I and mine.”

It seems odd to include in the ‘Story of St Paul’s’ what has happened so recently, but one day it will be history and perhaps somebody in the future will find it interesting. While I was trying to uncover what happened in the early days of St Pauls I often wished that Fr Kelly, and my two predecessors had written their version of the events of their day: For this reason perhaps I could say here that my name comes from Finland where my Father was born, and that I was born in Liverpool, the birthplace too of my Mother. The reason I, a religious priest, am in this parish is because a series of severe coronaries made it impossible for me to return to the missions where I had been before for a short time and where my superiors were planning to send me when I took ill in 1970.

I got off to a bad start in Poynton. About six weeks after my arrival I was rushed into hospital at midnight with a suspected coronary. However, this turned out to be a false alarm, or perhaps it was treated in the nick of time? After about ten days I was allowed out on condition I promised to rest for another two weeks. On the invitation of Fr Russell at Hazel Grove I went there for the fortnight, and it says much for Poynton that since that date over eight years ago I have not had a single day in bed. While I was ill Fr Russell and his curates looked after St. Paul’s with great diligence and kindness, even organizing the Confirmation that took place on 16 June while I was away.

The work and strain involved in a Visitation and Confirmation, for which I was totally unprepared, may have been at least a partial cause of the illness. A very important part of the preparation for a Bishop’s Visitation is the detailed report that must be made on the state of all the church property by a qualified surveyor. Mr Peter Mulroy volunteered to do this for us in 1974, and ever since he has kept a constant check of all property problems

was in the Park, near Poynton Pool. Then another was erected in Adlington, just off the main Road, opposite Street Lane, and so inside the present parish of St. Paul’s. Many American troops, especially from the Adlington Camp, used to come to the cinema-church in Poynton, some times in army trucks, sometimes in fully military parade.

At the end of 1941 the Catholics, who had scarcely arrived in Poynton and who had just acquired their first church, found themselves in the odd position of also being the sole possessors of a hall that was open to the general public for social events. They immediately started holding dances, bazaars, socials and other money-raising events in an effort to repay something of what Fr Kelly had paid for their church and hall. In this the tiny Catholic group received great support from the relatively rich Americans who were generous both in giving to the collections and also in attending the social events. In return many of the Catholics welcomed them into their homes, particularly for breakfast after the Sunday Mass. From about the end of 1942 the Catholics also organized a Canteen in their little hall every night, with a Whist Drive (not very popular with the Americans) and Dance (very popular) every Saturday night, and a Social Evening every Sunday. All these events were open to everybody, but they were organized by the Catholics and patronized mainly by themselves and the American troops.

Mrs Williamson who lived in 17 Bulkeley Road, had the keys for the church and hall, and also the responsibility for keeping the vestments, chalice, altar-wine etc. safe and dry in her home. She played a big part in organising the social events with the other Catholics. Providing refreshments was a big problem in those days of strict rationing, but somehow they managed, and thus they were able to give a fair account of money to Fr Kelly who, in September 1943, had to pay a further £163 because of dry rot in the floor of the hall.

What the people of Poynton thought about all these Catholics has not been recorded, but it must have been something of a shock to them, particularly when the American troops were eventually replaced by Poles in the camp at Adlington. Ever since Poynton had become a mining village about 1800 it had been not only solidly Protestant but on the whole quite anti-Catholic, as indeed was most of England at the time. It is said that Poynton miners led the Stockport Riots in 1852 when two Catholic churches were destroyed and that afterwards they made a pact in Park Lane Methodist Church that they would never allow a Popish chapel to be erected in the village. And yet things had so changed during the War that the same Church let its hall be used as a Catholic school and nearly every-

body in Poynton treated the evacuees with kindness and with active help in getting them to Mass. The arrival of the American and Polish soldiers further helped the Catholic cause. It was not in Poynton, but it was during the War, that an old lady was heard to say wonderingly. 'You know, I never knew the Poles were so Irish.' However, old prejudices and old attitudes die hard, and even after the War there was still a fair amount of distrust of Catholics. Today, thank God, that is dying out, and we are moving steadily towards greater trust, sympathy and love.

not move their children. This too was a disappointment to Fr Hurley, but as always he kept on trying. Gradually the numbers crept up. By May 1974 there were fifty five and the school year ended with fifty eight children in St Paul's. By then, however, Fr Hurley had left Poynton for Birkenhead to take up a new appointment as full-time "Officialis", a post he had had part-time while still in Poynton. It meant that he was in complete charge of all the matrimonial cases of the Shrewsbury Diocese, and he continued in this role until Easter 1982 when, because of his worsening health, he resigned. He still continues, however, to help in a part-time capacity.

This chapter is entitled, "The Eventful Years". In the writer's opinion, the years that Fr Hurley spent in Poynton and the work he did in and for St Paul's were the most eventful and the most important in all its history to date. The Presbytery and the Church, the School and the Ecumenical Movement of Poynton, every-thing in the life of this parish, bear his imprint. He formed and made St Paul's, and we should all be extremely grateful to him.

compensate, at least partly, for this loss the old Projection room was turned into a Meeting room by moving the choir and harmonium into the main body of the church and absorbing a small storeroom into the new Meeting room. This took place at the end of 1968, and in the following July Fr Hurley, with great foresight, bought 52 Clumber Road for £3,000. It was used for a time by his new housekeeper, Miss Tessa Stubbs, but the main reason for buying it was the land that went with it. This includes the curious little building known at present as “The Toy Box”, which in its time has been used for a Creamery and a Butchery among other things, the wooden garage next to it, and the bits of land in front and behind. All this will be invaluable if ever we need to extend or rebuild our church, and in the meantime it has other possibilities, such as a site for a temporary Meeting room. The old Projection room is not the complete answer to our “Meeting” needs.

It had always been Fr Hurley’s dream to have our own Catholic School, but it seemed a forlorn hope. St Peter’s got their first school only in 1955, and to do it they had to build it without Government help? To this day Wilmslow, which became a parish in 1914, is without its own school. Yet Fr Hurley went on applying and lobbying from 1964 onwards. Helped by a friendly County Councillor and the Catholic Educational Authorities, against all the odds, he succeeded in 1971 when unexpectedly the Department for Education and Science allocated £55,000 to build the first phase of St Paul’s Primary School in Marley Road. Before the building was completed in August 1973 the first of the great financial crises had hit the country, and these are still with us. Fr Hurley had just made it by the skin of his teeth: This really was his greatest achievement in Poynton and the one that had the most profound effect in changing the whole spiritual atmosphere of the Parish. He had struggled for many years to ensure some form of Catholic instruction for the numerous children attending non-Catholic schools, and for a long time he paid a bus to take children to Bollington Catholic School at no cost to the parents beyond what they gave in voluntary contributions with the other parishioners. Like all priests in his position he was hurt and disappointed by the lack of cooperation on the part of many parents, but he kept on trying ... and he got his school.

It was opened in September 1973. The first phase meant the projected Infant School, with three teaching areas and a large Practical Area, plus some other rooms. The final bill was just over £40,000, of which the Parish had to give about £10,000. The first Head was Mrs Shirley Hawkins and there were two other teachers, Miss Lang and Miss Lawton. On the Opening Day there were only thirty five children, as many parents would

THE NEW PARISH 1957 to 1960

The 1931 Census gives the population of Poynton-with-Worth as 3,944. It probably stayed about that number for the next twenty years, in spite of the closure of the mines. New industries came to the Poynton area and new houses were being built. About 1947 the first of the estates was started. It was built around Copperfield and Barnaby Roads. In 1954 the second, the Distaff Road Estate, was occupied. Many of the newcomers found work in the developing Aircraft Factory at Woodford. Among the new people were a number of Catholics, and others had already moved into the houses on Chester Road and Park Lane. At the beginning of 1957 they had grown to about three hundred, and this led Bishop Murphy, prompted by Fr Walsh who was then the Parish Priest of Hazel Grove and Poynton, to appoint Fr John Lynch as the first Parish Priest of St Paul’s. He was officially installed on Sunday 27 September 1957, and from the 4 October onwards there was for the first time in centuries a regular daily Mass. The first Presbytery was 44 Dickens Lane where it remained till 1964.

The new parish was fittingly called St Paul’s, for it was an offshoot of St Peter’s, but even more fittingly it could have been called ‘Our Lady’s’ or “St Mary’s” for it was the immediate successor to the Catholic Poynton Chapel of that title. For nearly twenty years the priests from Hazel Grove had catered for the spiritual needs of the Poynton Catholics and during all that time they had also been responsible, through their parishioners for the financial needs of their Poynton out-church. All through the forties and fifties the Catholics in Poynton had tried to help their own finances through running social events, including Bingo on all Fridays and Saturdays in the late fifties. Even with the infusion of American and Polish contributions, however, they were unable to meet all their liabilities, and it was St Peter’s people who bore the brunt. St Peter’s is our “Mother-Parish” and all their priests, including Fr Peters, the present Parish Priest and Fr Russell his predecessor, have been the source of immense support for Poynton. We all owe them a great debt of gratitude, especially this writer.

With the advent of Fr Lynch St Paul’s burst into a flurry of activities, both spiritual and social. He was young and zealous, and he flung himself eagerly into his many duties, but particularly that of getting to know his flock. Towards the end of the last century Cardinal Manning once said that England has eight Sacraments, and the eighth is the door-knocker in the hands of the priest. Fr Lynch had similar sentiments and his people

responded readily to frequent visits to their homes.

Sunday Masses were at 8 and 10 a.m. with evening Devotions at 6.30. The weekday Masses were at 7.30 a.m. and 9 on Saturdays. Before his arrival Mrs Brennan, teaching then in the Stockport Convent School, was in charge of the Guild of St Agnes in Hazel Grove. Several of Poynton school-girls were in her group so she had a nucleus of members when she started the Guild at St Paul's soon after Fr Lynch's arrival. The members of the Union of Catholic Mothers also transferred themselves to the Poynton branch and induced others to join as well. The title was loosely interpreted to include any Catholic lady, and the first president was Miss Gertie Rourke who died recently. She had Mrs McDonald, still with us, as Treasurer. A branch of the Men's Guild was also started soon afterwards. The Catholic instruction of the many children in the State school was intensified, and the Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour was started on 13 November 1957.

Along with this spiritual activity Fr Lynch also generated a great deal of enthusiasm for social events. The Parish-hall in the old cinema was in constant use, not only for the Guild meetings and Instruction classes, but also for concerts, dances, Bingo and the like. Dinner Dances and other functions were sometimes held outside the parish. At the end of 1959 a Teenage Dance Club was started. It was, however, the Union of Catholic Mothers who were the most active. After the second Mass on every Holy Day of Obligation they ran a Coffee-morning, occasionally linked with a Bring-and-Buy Sale. They had frequent Jumble Sales and they more or less made themselves entirely responsible for boosting the Autumn Fair which had started in a small way some time earlier. Quite often they had trips for themselves, either to groups in neighbouring parishes or even to things like the Blackpool Lights. They also went every year on a short retreat.

Nearly all the social events, including those of the Women, went towards paying off the Parish debt, which in December 1957 was £3,132, mostly due to buying the house for the priest in Dickens Lane. The Parish was divided into districts and an Outdoor Collection was made in each district every week, with Fr Lynch doing one district in turn each week. Later on Football Pools were also started. Early in 1958 Fr Lynch was able to announce that the debt had been reduced to £2,600, and on 10 May 1960, not long before he left, he told them that the debt had been finally liquidated. They were big sums for those days, and there were many other recurring expenses.

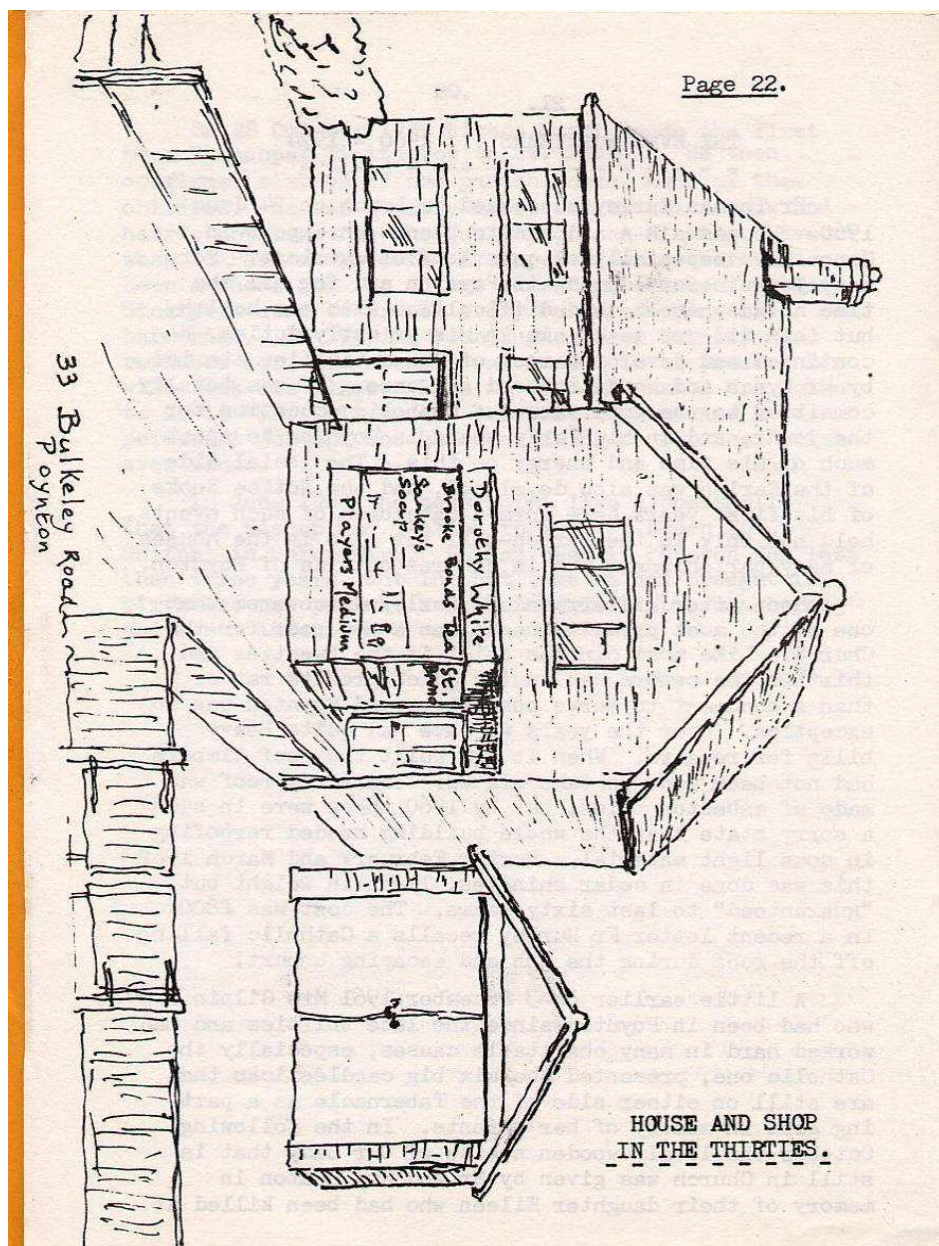
Another event occurred early in 1958. The main altar in church was

Episcopal Visitation to St Pauls confirmed thirty three children and four adults. The numbers were such that it was becoming increasingly difficult to fit them into the tiny church for Sunday Mass. Accordingly Fr Hurley began the lengthy preparations for extending the church.

The eventual plan saw the absorption of the hall into the church and the building of the present Lady Chapel. This meant re-flooring the entire building to get it on a single level and installing the false ceiling that most people admire. The three sacristies were constructed and one of the old exits was walled up and the other turned into a door with steps leading to the Presbytery. The new altars were ordered and all the woodwork behind and above the main altar was made as well as the parquet floor of the sanctuary which was within wrought-iron and wood altar rails. All the sacristy and altar furniture was bought, gas central heating installed, a complete electrical rewiring done and finally the whole church was decorated. Mass was said for the time in the extended, but at that time unfinished church on Sunday 4th April 1965, and the whole job was completed by September. The total bill for the entire restoration came to £5,680, but this did not include the benches. These were given by the Doyle family who thus became the donors of all the benches in the church.

To find the money for these and other expenses Fr Hurley, at the end of 1964, had introduced Planned Giving to the parish by means of the Offertory Envelopes we still use. Besides encouraging people to use their discretion and generosity in supporting the church much better than the former collections did, these envelopes are particularly useful to us in Poynton owing to the kindness of the Hazel Grove priests who always return to us our envelopes when given in the collections in their church. Around the same time that the Planned Giving was started the Covenant Scheme was introduced. Through it the Government returns to the Church, or any recognized Charity, all the tax that the giver has already paid on what they are giving. Mr Smith Scoble was in charge of the Covenants when they were first started, and on his death in 1973, Mr Jim Ryder continued his work. For many years now Mr and Mrs Binder have been doing it for us. From a modest beginning in the mid-sixties, it has now grown to nearly £3,500 a year in income for the Church which we would have to find in other ways if the government were less helpful towards deserving Charities.

Although St Paul's had gained a great deal through extending the church so that it could now hold about 240, compared to the 120 while the church was smaller, the loss of the hall was a grievous blow. To



greatly improved and a Lady Altar in wood was placed next to it, on the Clumber Road side of the Church. In December of that same year Mr Walter Doyle on behalf of his family donated new benches for the whole of the church as it existed at the time. To make them fit one of the relics of the old cinema was taken away - the Standing-room space with its rail and steps. There were further changes in the porch area at the beginning of 1959 when a new Baptistry was built. In it was a Font made and donated by Mr McDonough whose wife is still with us. Later it was replaced by the present beautiful wooden Font that is now in the Sanctuary. The Baptistry, with its pretty arch and wrought iron gates remained in its original form until Easter of this year when it was converted into the Piety Stall.

On 28 October 1959 Bishop Murphy made the first ever Episcopal Visitation to St. Paul's. He then confirmed sixteen of the parishioners, most of them children. He was greatly impressed by all he saw and heard, not least by the quality of the singing. Even when St Paul's was still a chapel-of-ease there had been a choir and for a time Miss Derbyshire of St Mary's Stockport used to travel every Sunday to play the harmonium. In 1957 Mr John Hughes from Barnaby Road replaced her, and when he was unable to be present his wife took his place. Late in 1958 she asked Mrs Dolma to do it "for this once," but that once became a permanent job and she has been doing it for the Parish ever since.

In June 1960 the news burst like a bombshell that the Bishop had decided to move Fr Lynch to Shifnal in Shropshire. He had been in Poynton for less than three years, but in that time he had brought to birth the new parish, and when he left it was a strong and lusty infant.

THE EVENTFUL YEARS 1960 - 1974

Fr. Thomas Hurley succeeded Fr Lynch on 24 June 1960. He was a B A and was to become an expert in Canon Law, especially on questions of marriage. For many years before coming to Poynton and for all the time he was here he had difficulties with his health, but this did not deter him in his priestly duties. He continued and developed most of the activities started by Fr Lynch and he introduced new ones. He was totally committed to the importance of Catholic education for the young, and in his early years in Poynton he spent much of his time and energy on this. The social side of the Parish was also developed, and the Notice Books of his first years here form a catalogue of such events, held not only in the Parish-hall but also in the houses of many parishioners and in centres outside of Poynton.

Soon after his arrival Fr Hurley discovered that one of the most pressing needs was a new roof for the Church. Like most cinemas built in the twenties and thirties the owners had wanted quick profits rather than a monument to serve posterity; and Poynton was no exception. Over the years we have had quite heavy bills for repairs. When it was built the roof timbers had not been made to take slates. The first roof was made of asbestos tiles, but by 1960 these were in such a sorry state that the whole building needed reroofing in some light material. During February and March 1962 this was done in cedar shingles, light in weight but 'guaranteed' to last sixty years. The cost was £300. In a recent letter Fr Hurley recalls a Catholic falling off the roof during the job and escaping unhurt.

A little earlier on 3 December 1961 Mrs Gilpin, who had been in Poynton since the late thirties and had worked hard in many charitable causes, especially the Catholic one, presented the six big candlesticks that are still on either side of the Tabernacle as a parting gift in memory of her parents. In the following October the lovely wooden statue of Our Lady that is still in Church was given by Mr and Mrs Heaton in memory of their daughter Eileen who had been killed at the age of twenty in a car crash in December 1961.

In 1963 Fr Hurley heard that the Whites who rented the "Cinema Shop" in Bulkeley Road were thinking of giving it up. He eventually agreed with the owner, Mrs Casemore, to pay just under £3,000 for it. The Whites were not unnaturally disappointed that they could not get "the good will price", but they got some satisfaction when Fr Hurley bought up their entire stock and then sold it off to his people. On P 22 opposite there is an artist's impression of the house and shop as they were in the thirties, described to

him and me by the daughter of the Whites who was recently here on holiday. It looks big, but in fact it was "all Front", consisting of two downstairs rooms next to one another. One was the shop, now the Priest's Study, with above it a small bedroom and storeroom; and the other was the living room with above another small bedroom. Between the shop and house was the front door, with the stairs leading off it. At the back of the shop there was a tiny kitchen ("eight feet by four", the daughter's husband said) and directly above it an equally small bathroom. The toilet was outside in a yard that was bigger than today's. There was also a large garage, separated from the shop by a passage.

Fr Hurley's architect built a good sized kitchen behind the sitting-room and a housekeeper's sitting-room behind the shop, over this last he put a big bathroom. The old garage was replaced by a reception-room, now used as a counting-room, and over this he added another bedroom, linking everything with a corridor upstairs and down. The result was a lovely, homely house, not pretentious but adequate. The renovations cost £2,850, but it meant that for the first time the priest was next to the Church and the Blessed Sacrament.

Fr Hurley moved into his new Presbytery on Tuesday 7 January 1964, and the following Saturday there was a solemn blessing of the new house in the presence of some parishioners and the recently arrived Vicar of St George's, the Rev Bob Lewis, and his wife Joan, both of whom are still here. In those days such encounters with "our separated brethren" were rare, and Fr Hurley and Canon Lewis both date the real birth of Ecumenism in Poynton from that day.

On Sunday 23 February 1964 at the 4.30 Service Fr Gratian of the Order of St Francis solemnly erected the present Stations of the Cross. These fourteen beautiful bronze images cost £98, and the money for them was raised by the young girls in the Guild of St Agnes through various functions, under the inspired leadership of Miss Joan Seville. She was Fr Hurley's housekeeper who had given up her nursing career to look after him. She died of cancer at the age of thirty two on 16 August 1963. She saw the Stations before her death, and there were special prayers for her during the Blessing ceremony. Later they went quite black, but Mr Kevin Molloy cleaned and lacquered them very successfully during Lent 1979.

By 1964 the expansion of Poynton had begun in earnest. Many of the Estates had been or were being built, especially those within easy distance of Poynton Place. Fr Hurley reckoned that by then he had six hundred Catholics, and on the strength of those numbers he made his first application for a Catholic school. In that year Bishop Grasar in his first