

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE PARISH

Uddingston area

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Uddingston, like most of the other villages and towns in Lanarkshire, was beginning to show the effects of industrialisation; many of the traditional handcrafts and disappeared and workers, who had formerly been employed in weaving or agriculture, were now to be found in smithies or foundries. Besides providing sources of employment for local residents, the new industries were responsible for bringing other workers to the village and an indication of the origin of some of the incomers was to be found in the nickname “Wee Ireland” given to houses adjoining Wilkies Plough Works on the Old Mill Road. These houses, which were opposite the Co-operative, have now been demolished and the site is used as a car park. However, this Irish immigration had brought few Catholics to the village for according to the late Robert McElhinney of Croftbank Crescent there were only about six Catholic families in Uddingston in 1848. In the first half of the century Catholics were more inclined to settle in the Tannochside area where the coal pits provided a ready source of employment. Around 1848 there was a dramatic increase in the Catholic population of Glasgow and its surrounding districts, owing to a large influx of people fleeing the ravages of the Irish Famine, but relatively few of these work-seeking immigrants settled in Uddingston as they were more attracted to places such as Coatbridge or Motherwell where the Industrial Revolution had made greater impact and the opportunities for work were more plentiful. However, the rate of settlement in Uddingston increased rapidly in the second half of the century owing to industrial expansion and the building of two railway links to Glasgow, and it was the latter of these which hastened the demand for commuter villas in the area. The estimated population of Uddingston in 1881 was 3,542 – four times the total of 1850. There is no reference, however, to the number of Catholic residents in the village at that time.

In 1843, Uddingston and Tannochside came within the parochial boundaries of the new St Mary’s parish in Hamilton; and so they remained for the next thirty-nine years. Catholics in Uddingston and Tannochside had to walk to Hamilton in all kinds of weather and it will be readily appreciated that attendance at Mass in those days must have been a real test of Faith. With the opening of Holy Family Parish, Mossend, in 1868 and St Mary’s, Coatbridge, in 1874, the Catholics in Tannochside

had a choice of nearer churches whilst those in the village were still obliged to make the long walk to Hamilton.

Establishing of St John the Baptist Mission

It must have come as a great relief to the people of Tannochside and Uddingston when the Hierarchy decided to open a new Mission in Uddingston in September 1882. Archbishop Eyre of Glasgow appointed Fr. Denis McCarthy as the first parish priest and he celebrated his first public Mass in the Victoria Hall, Crofthead Street, in October 1882. He continued to use this hall for Mass until the new chapel-school was built the following year. The first baptism in the new parish was recorded on the 8th October, 1882, when John Boyd, son of Peter and Mary Jane Boyd (nee Farmer) was baptised by Fr. McCarthy, the godparents on this occasion being John Clancy and Mary Cosgrove.

A site at the northern end of the Old Mill Road, bounded by the L.M.S. and L.N.E.R. railways, was chosen for the erection of a new chapel-school and presbytery, and construction work commenced in the autumn of 1882. Rapid progress was made and the new buildings were completed by the following summer.

The important and imposing ceremony to mark the opening of the new Parish was held on Sunday, 24th June 1883. The chapel-school dedicated to the patronage of St John the Baptist, was solemnly opened by Archbishop Eyre of Glasgow who presided and preached at the opening High Mass in the forenoon; the Right Rev. John Aloysius Maguire, who was himself later to become Archbishop of Glasgow, preached the sermon at the Solemn Benediction in the evening.

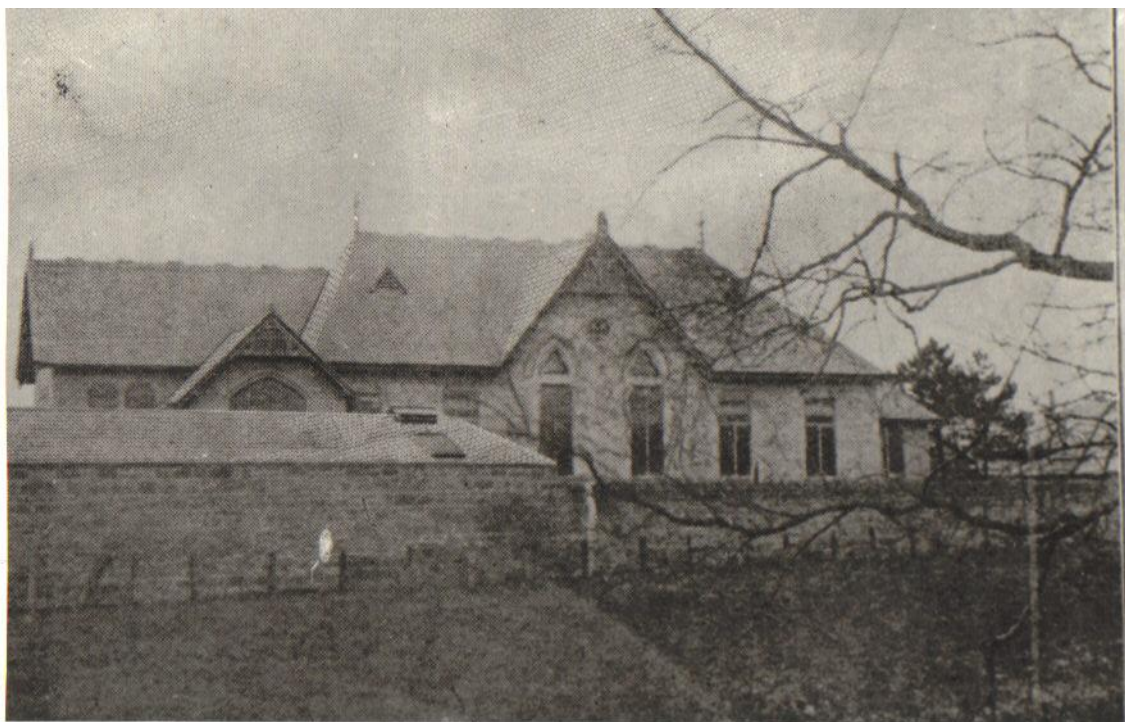
The first entry into the Catholic Directory for the Clergy and Laity of Scotland, 1883 reads:

Uddingston, 1882, Rev Denis McCarthy (1877).

On Sunday, Mass at 9, 11; Sunday School at 2.30pm.

The Mission was opened in Sept 1882. A Chapel-School (St John the Baptist) and presbytery are being built. In the meantime the Sunday Services are held in a rented hall.

“The school buildings comprised of a large schoolroom and a suitably proportioned classroom. There are separate entrances, sheds, playgrounds etc. for boys and girls. At one end of the schoolroom, and separated from it by folding doors, there is a small but artistic sanctuary, and adjoining this is the sacristy. When the folding doors of the sanctuary, and also those separating the classroom from the schoolroom, are opened, a chapel is formed 96 feet long by 33 broad, giving accommodation for about 600 persons. The buildings are designed in the early English style, and form a prominent feature in the district. The architects were Messrs. Bruce and Sturrock, Glasgow”. (*Extract from the Catholic Directory for Scotland 1884 p 214*) The school had its own official opening and first intake of 116 pupils on 13th August 1883.



The Old Chapel-School (picture above!)

Though the chapel-school is generally regarded as the first chapel in Uddingston, the late Fr. Gilbert Hill of Greyfriars uncovered evidence of an earlier one in the course of his historical research and David Jamieson, our local historian, included this information in his history of the village. The Lady Chapel, as it was known, is thought to have been built, about the beginning of the 7th Century and it was dedicated to St. Lasarian, the first Bishop of Leighlin in Ireland, who was also known as St. Molaise. The chapel was situated near the River Clyde where the railway bridge crosses the river but evidence of its existence has disappeared as the site is now covered by the railway embankment. Though many place names in the West of Scotland bear witness to the missionary activity of St. Molaise, the only reminder of his work in Uddingston is the name 'Lady Isle' given to one of the streets in the Knowehead Council Estate.

In 1883, the parochial boundaries of the new St John the Baptist's parish stretched from Bothwellpark to Calderbraes, taking in the land lying between the natural boundaries of the River Clyde and the River Calder – a very extensive area indeed. Bearing in mind that transport facilities were very limited, one can appreciate the difficulties experienced by our early parish priests in caring for such a scattered and fragmented parish and tribute must be paid to Fr. Denis McCarthy, Fr. John Murphy and Fr. Ronald Mortimer for their pioneering efforts to establish the spiritual and social foundations of their charge under such difficult conditions.

Establishing the new Mission posed financial challenges for Fr Denis McCarthy. Extracts from the first Annual Return of Mission to the Archdiocese of Glasgow in 1883 show that the number in the congregation as 770 and the total number of Baptisms as 52. Financially the parish had very humble beginnings as the Annual Income for the year was £395-14-7d, the Expenditure was £343-10-5d leaving a balance of £52-4-2d.

On 23rd November 1883, Fr Denis McCarthy made a request to the Archdiocese for a loan and grant to the value of £200 as the Mission had incurred debts of £3,775. He writes on the request form, "the ordinary income of year September 1882 to

September 1883 was insufficient to meet ordinary expenditure. The extraordinary expenditure incurred in furnishing the house, altar, school (apparatus) was covered by the extraordinary income. ...During last year no interest on debt has been paid by the Mission. ...Total interest and feu duties for 1884 amounted to £286-9-10d".

Also noted on the request form, " the population is composed, with one exception, of miners and labourers". A letter in support of the loan and grant states, "the income is very good for this Mission – it amounts to nearly ten shillings per head of the *population*".

By 16th April 1883 building work carried out at the School and Chapel house amounted to £2,057.

Growth of the Mission

In 1886 Fr John Murphy PP, in the Annual Mission Returns to the Archdioceses, gives a census figure of 850, constructed as follows:

| <i>Area</i> | <i>Church population</i> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Uddingston | 265 |
| Tannochside | 254 |
| Nackerty | 96 |
| Thorniewood | 55 |
| Bothwell | 22 |
| Bothwell Park | 145 |
| | 837 |
| Allowing for mistakes | 13 |
| Total | 850 |

When Fr. Arthur Beyaert, a Belgian priest, took charge of the parish in 1897 the Catholic population was growing rapidly owing to the opening of coal mines in the area and it was principally on account of this increase that Fr. Matthew Burke was appointed as his curate in 1899. An indication of the growth that was taking place is given by the following statistics compiled from the Baptismal Register;

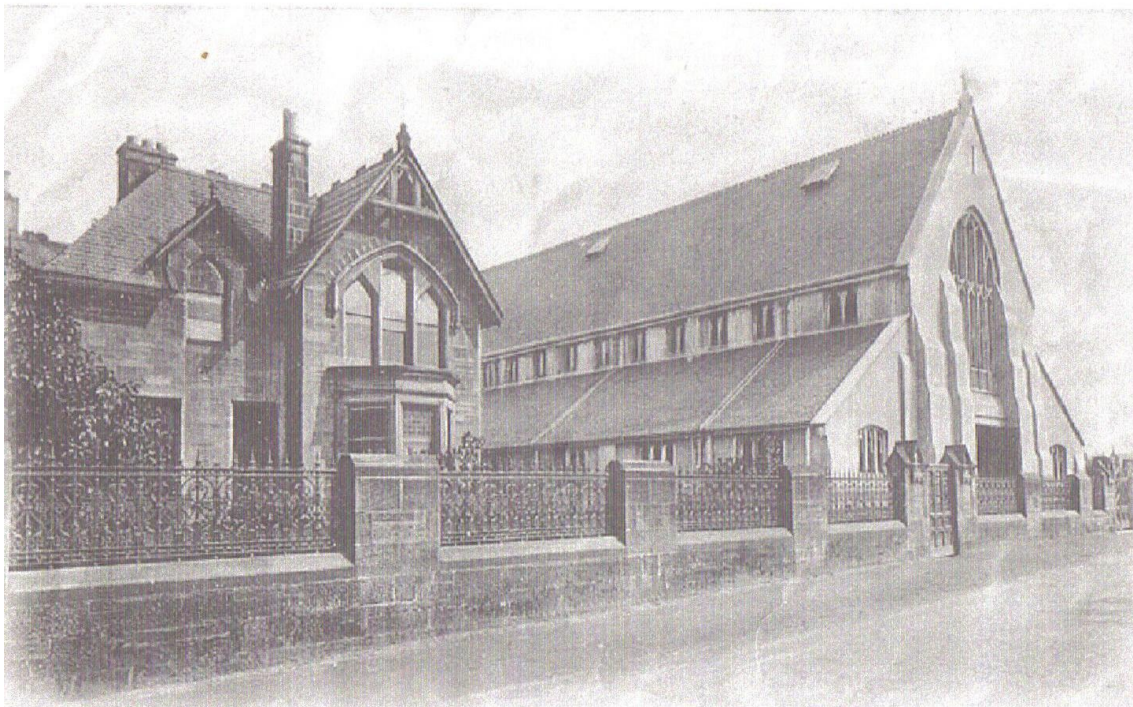
| | | |
|-----------|----------------|------|
| 1882-1890 | Total baptisms | 424 |
| 1891-1900 | Total baptisms | 1000 |
| 1901-1910 | Total baptisms | 2141 |

An all-time record was established in year 1908 when 252 baptisms were recorded - a population explosion! Judging from these figures, it is not surprising to find that a new school extension for infants was built in 1899. As the chapel-school was also becoming too small to accommodate the growing congregation, plans were drawn up to build a much larger church on a site adjoining the presbytery. See appendix xx for numbers in congregation, baptisms, confirmations, marriages and school roll.

In spite of the fact that financial support was unpredictable in a largely mining community owing to strikes and pit closures at the turn of the century, Fr Beyaert forged ahead with his plans to build a new church. Encouraged by his zeal and drive the parishioners subscribed faithfully to the Building Fund though their donations were very much limited by their meagre incomes. Conscious of the economic difficulties of his parishioners and the financial burden confronting them, Fr Beyaert enlisted the financial and material support of his relatives and friends in Belgium. They responded generously to his appeal by providing the High Altar and most of the oak furnishings for the sanctuary; the present Stations of the Cross were donated by the Beyaert family. It was mainly due to the untiring efforts and enthusiasm of Fr Beyaert that the present St John's church, capable of seating 1,000 people, was ready for opening in March 1902.

"the church has a large frontage to the Old Mill Road. The style of architecture is severe Gothic, and the design is a most harmonious one, by Mr Fredrick Vincent Burke, of Messrs. Tennant & Burke, Glasgow. The edifice is not substantially built, and measures 132 feet long by 60 feet broad. The church is internally divided into a chancel, middle nave, and two side aisles – the chancel arch separating the sanctuary from the main body of the church. In line with the chancel are two sacristies, while the confessionals and baptistery are placed at the end of the church. The high altar is a most artistic and beautiful piece of workmanship, and is of carved oak and gilded – the altar being universally admired by experts and others who have visited the church. Over the tabernacle of the altar there is a large canopy treated in

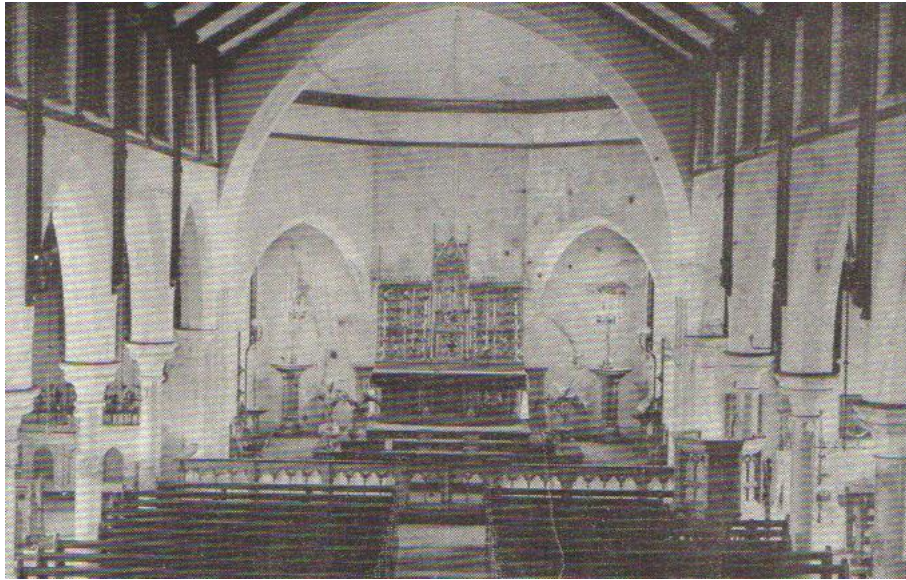
the same was as the altar – of carved oak and gilded, while the eye is attracted by a pretty carved and gilded panel in the rear of the canopy. At the side of the altar are two magnificent candelabra and pedestals – a gift from the Flynn Family, Uddingston. from the chancel arch there is a large sanctuary lamp, with corona, for numerous candles, the altar rails and pulpit are of elaborate carved oak. The church is seated for nearly 1,000 persons, but with little difficulty, accommodation could be provided for 1,200 or 1,300 persons”. (Catholic Directory Scotland, 1903, p217)



St John the Baptist, Chapel House and Church

According to a report issued at the time, the solemn opening of the new church on the 15th March, 1902, was a very impressive ceremony. As guests arrived, they were met at the conservatory by a military guard of honour and among the dignitaries who attend was the Spanish Consul who was living in Douglas Gardens at the time. Twenty-six priest and nine altar boys in the sanctuary assisted at the Solemn High Mass celebrated by the Very Rev. Canon Dyer of St Mary's, Glasgow, and a large choir, conducted by Mr John McCusker, led the capacity congregation in singing the Mass. It was an ironic twist of fate that Fr Beyaert, who had put so much effort into preparing for this great day, was unable to attend because of an injured foot. After Mass, 160 guests were entertained to lunch in the large hall in the Royal

Buildings at Uddingston Cross. In the evening Solemn Benediction was conducted by Fr Van Hecke and the sermon was given by Fr John Murphy who had been parish priest in St John's from 1887 to 1890. He congratulated the parishioners for the fervour and zeal which they had shown towards the building of the new church.



Interior of old church – [photo from centenary book](#)

[See calendar August for clearer photo](#)

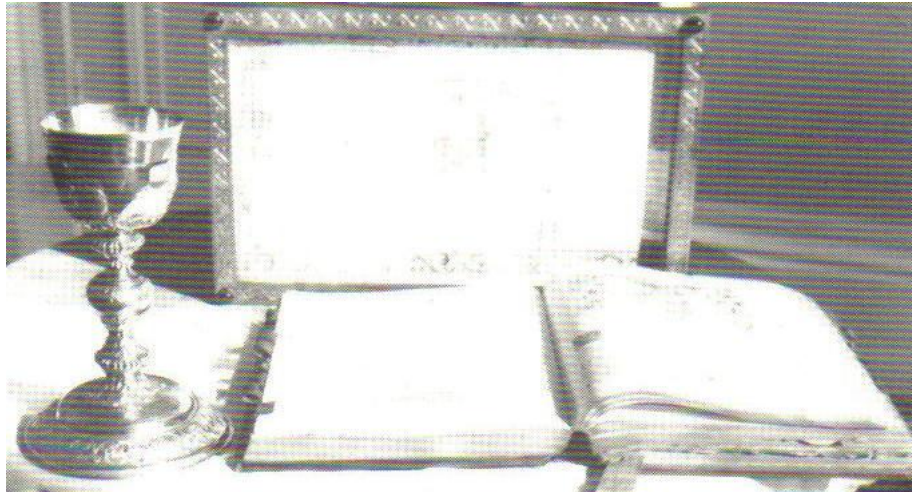
Shortly after celebrating his Silver Jubilee on the 18th March, 1904, Fr Beyaert set about the task of building the League of the Cross Hall in the North British Road to provide a social centre for his parishioners but, sadly, his enjoyment of the new church and hall was short-lived as he was replaced as parish priest in 1908. Extraordinary expenses for the School and Hall at this time amounted to £1,079-4-5d

Fr Beyaert's successor was the well-remembered, energetic and genial Fr James Towie whose long term of office in St John's had a rather depressing start. The opening of the new St Bride's chapel school in Bothwell in 1910 brought about the transfer of many of St John's parishioners and school children to the new parish and this decrease in the congregation was aggravated by the fact that many miners were leaving the district because of pit closures or frequent strikes. However, in spite of his depleted source of income, Fr Towie continued to reduce the debt incurred by the new church and hall and his adverse comments about 'snowflakes' (the old silver three-penny pieces) in the offertory collection were probably well-intended. It should

be noted, however, that he was always sensitive to the needs of his parishioners and collections were suspended during the strikes.

A few months after the outbreak of the First World War an Uddingston soldier had a chance meeting Bruges with his former parish priest, Fr Beyaert, who was then resident in Belgium. It was shortly after this meeting that Fr Beyaert was taken captive by the Germans and sentenced to four years imprisonment for collaborating with the British Forces. The Belgium connection was again renewed in 1915 when war refugee families from Belgium were accommodated in Viewpark House and fourteen Belgium nuns were housed in Bothwell Castle Mansion (now demolished) which was then owned by the Earl of Home.

Another interesting, but little-known St John's link with the First World War was recently brought to light by Jim Daly of Kylepark. His brother-in-law, Johnny Power, whilst fighting with the British Forces in France in 1915, came across a much-dented and battered chalice in the ruins of the Cathedral in Arras. Johnny rescued the chalice from the rubble, carried it with him during his service in France and eventually brought it home to Uddingston. His parents, Mr and Mrs John Power, had the chalice repaired and presented it to Fr Towie on the occasion of his Silver Jubilee. He took the chalice with him when he was transferred to Port Glasgow and there it remained for many years until it was traced and brought back to Uddingston by Jim Daly. This chalice, which is still used regularly at Mass, should remind us to pray for the souls of those parishioners who sacrificed their lives, in the two World Wars.



The Chalice, alongside a missal used in the chapel school in the 1890's, and an altar-card brought from Belgium by Fr Beyaert

In 1920 Fr Towie celebrated his Silver Jubilee and it was about that time that he purchased the old Victoria Hall (situated in Crofthead Street, approximately where the rear entrance to Tunnock's factory is currently situated), from Mr Green, of Playhouse fame. The 'Old Vic' as it was affectionately known, soon became the hub of social activities in the parish. Fr O'Brien's Dramatic Club, Fr Watt's Sunday Evening Concerts and the parochial Dances were all held in the Old Vic, and it is a measure of their popularity that patrons from surrounding parishes were frequent attenders at these functions. Though there is no accurate information available, it is believed that it was in the 1920's that a pipe organ was installed in the church and a tennis court and putting green were laid out on the ground adjoining the school. Voluntary labour for these projects was readily available and forthcoming as the miners in the village were then involved in the long drawn-out Miner's Strike of 1926. A parochial magazine issued in 1927, to mark the Silver Jubilee of the church lists a wide variety of spiritual and secular organisations indicating that parochial life in St John's was then in a very healthy state.



Fr Towie's Silver Jubilee Concert 1920

[Original photo KH has](#)

The driving force behind all these activities was the popular parish priest, Fr Towie, whose extrovert personality penetrated all barriers of class and religion – a forerunner of the ecumenical movement. Some of the older parishioners still speak respectfully of his blackthorn walking-stick, reputedly used to encourage wayward worshippers, Catholic and Protestant alike. It was certainly a loss, felt by the whole village community, when Fr Towie was transferred to Port Glasgow in 1930. Leaving a parish which was then showing the fruits of his labours, and parting from the many friends he had made during his twenty-three years in Uddingston, must have been a great wrench for Fr Towie but at least he could take consolation from the fact that his long stay in St John's had allowed him to see many of his plans for the parish reach a fruitful conclusion.

During the time of Fr Towie, the first 'St John the Baptist Parish Quarterly' magazine was published in August 1927. The parochial notes section shows that Fr Towie, Parish Priest, Fr A Watt, Senior Assistant and Fr Daniel O'Brien served in the parish at that time. Sunday Mass: 8.00am, 10.00am (for children), 11.30am (with Sermon).

Benediction on Sunday at 6.00pm. Parish groups included the Altar Society, Sacred Heart, St Vincent de Paul, Boy's Guild and Girl's Guild, and some of their members formed a Dramatic Club and Athletic club, Boy Scouts and Women's Social Guild. The Day School was under the auspices of the Franciscan Sisters (from Bothwell), with an average roll of 1,026. Also noted in the magazine under 'Items of Interest' was the following; 'Dr B Culhane has severed his connection with Uddingston and left to take on another practice in Derby'. Described as, 'a gentleman of the first order', and a most devoted medical adviser. He carries with him the grateful thanks of a parish he served for seven years. The practice has been taken over by an old St John's boy in the person of Dr Thomas McElhinney, one whom the parish is very proud of and one whom the parishioners will find a very worthy successor to Dr B Culhane".

After the period of parochial expansion and development, which seem to have peaked during Fr Towie's pastorate, it was natural to expect that a time for consolidation would follow and it was at the beginning of such a period that Fr Patrick McCarthy took up his appointment as parish priest in 1930. The more cautious parochial policy was one which was very much dictated by the harsh economic climate of the 'Hungry Thirties' and it is a great tribute to his careful management and guidance that he succeeded in reducing the parochial debt during such difficult times.

Like his predecessor, Fr McCarthy soon became a familiar figure in the village and many still recall how he toured the parish at a leisurely pace, perched precariously on a sturdy upright Raleigh bicycle. However, owing to his retiring nature and lacking the health and vitality of Fr Towie, Fr McCarthy tended to confine his attention to the spiritual life of the parish, leaving the organisation of the social activities to his curates, Fr O'Brien, Fr Heaney and Fr Forbes. Under their leadership and direction the tennis club, dramatic club, football and billiard teams all continued to flourish and frequent reference is still made to the honours achieved in their respective activities. Records show that in 1934 the income generated by the tennis club was £36-0-0d. By 1936 the much beloved 'Old Vic' was demolished at a cost of £21-5-0d.

There is evidence from parish records that by 1935 a telephone had been installed in the chapel house; the telephone number was 156. The expenses for this device were £7-17-2d.

Whilst there appeared to be a thriving parish with many activities there was also an awareness of events beyond the parish boundaries. In 1937 there was a collection for 'Spanish Children' who were victims of the Spanish Civil War (July 1936- April 1939 – founding of the General Franco dictatorship) and the sum of £12 was raised for this cause. Closer to home, in the same year, the 'Achill Bothy Fire' occurred in Kirkintilloch. Ten young men from Achill, one of the largest islands off the coast of Ireland, and as was the tradition in that area, came to Scotland from May until October where they worked as 'tatie-hokers'. The migrants were in the employment of the Glasgow based company, W&A Graham Ltd. The bothy caught fire and ten men aged 13-23 years lost their lives on 16 September 1937. The parishioners, many of Irish ancestry, gave £13-10-11d to the disaster fund.

A milestone in the life of St John's was reached in 1939 when the parish boundaries were re-organised to accommodate the newly-formed St Columba's parish in Viewpark. The consequent loss of parishioners to the new parish, the outbreak of the Second World War, resulting in the departure of many young people to the Army, Navy and Air Force, and the many restrictions imposed by the war, all brought difficult times; however, in spite of these adversities most of the parochial organisations continued to function. Outstanding among these was the Senior Dramatic Club whose war-time productions in the Miners' Welfare dispelled many an hour of war-time gloom. Dan Geraghty, Pat Cassidy, Barbara Smythe, Margaret Hendry, Frank Hannaway, Pat Darroch, Willie O'Neill and Charlie McCormick – to name but a few – all gave polished and versatile performances worthy of any professional stage. One such performance was 'Beneath the Wee Red Lums', by T.M. Watson, a Scots comedy in four acts.

It is interesting to note in 1941 the Christmas census of the congregation is reported as:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Uddingston | 1,525 |
| Alpine Terrace (New Edinburgh Road) | 241 |
| Birkenshaw housing scheme | 798 |
| Total | 2,546 |

Charlie McCormick's talents were not confined to the stage, however, as he spent many laborious hours compiling and editing the Parish Magazine (price one penny). The following extracts from a January 1945 edition, characteristic of Charlie's fluent and homely style, provide a flavour of parochial life during those troubled times:

NEWS FROM THE FRONTS

Private Robert Evans writes home to his mother and tells her of many things, especially his meeting with soldier John Lennon, Alpine. When these lads met they were stationed in the African side of the Mediterranean. After a short but joyful companionship, they were parted, bound for Italy, so they were to believe.

Coming on for 10 o'clock on Christmas Eve, in Rome, Driver John McCusker and a few companions ambled their way towards the Vatican thinking that they would have ample time to go to Confession! On arriving they found that there were 2000 people already there with the same intent. A scene never to be forgotten, such a vast crowd, and Confession being heard in twenty different languages. Johnny and his companions managed to get their point and spent a very happy Christmas in surroundings 100 per cent Catholic.

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News has been received of the death of John Dowdells, R.N., Birkenshaw, whilst on duty. The official citation is 'lost at sea'. Our prayers are requested for deceased who was an upstanding young parishioner. R.I.P. Our Lady of Dolours, comfort his widowed mother.

RECENT VISITORS

Lieutenant Henry Curran, U.S. Navy, visited the village where his father was born. His father, Manus Curran, was closely associated with St John's Billiard Club, playing as first man in the team. Henry was greatly impressed with the hospitality shown him by all Scots people, especially the 'caur' driver and conductress, who slowed down the 'caur' and helped him to look for 98 Main Street. A seven mile journey and treatment like this, all for one penny! Some going, says Henry.

Another visitor was Dr. John Callaghan, U.S. Navy, who called to see relatives and acquaintances of this father, John Callaghan, who resided at Spindlehowe Road. His people were Mr and Mrs Pat Callaghan, his mother being better known as Auntie Katie. Dr Callaghan certainly does like Scotland.

CALLING FORMER CLASSMATE

From somewhere in the South Pacific, sailor Jacky Donnelly, U.S Navy, in a letter to his aunt, asks to be remembered to his old class mates, W. Craig, P. Nugent, Ed. Markey, J. Petrauskas and Jas Lowe, not forgetting teacher Miss Hay.

Though a typical American, Jacky still remembers the happy times he spent at St John's School.

THE LEAGUE HALL

These days and evenings, when one enters the hall, they are met with the scene of much activity, and truly, is such the case.

Since taking over, Hall-keeper Mr Neil Murray has left no stone unturned in an effort to make the patrons as comfortable as possible, and they have responded with a will to help.

These notes would be incomplete without special mention of the name of Pat Irwin, Joe Coon and Hugh Power respectively, who have sponsored not less than six billiard handicaps, all having large entries, and being ably won by the following: Jas. Lowe, Hugh Power, Pat Doyle, Jas Hannaway, Pat Devine and Jas. McGuinness. Here's wishing all success in every undertaking during 1945.



Fr Towie with St John's billiard team in the League Hall, North British Road

The Senior and Junior Boys Billiard Teams are present at a stand-still through lack of opponents. The Guild prefects have extended invitations to Glasgow parochial clubs and hope to hear from them in the near future.

A complete O.H.M.S. List will be given in next month's issue, therefore would houses who have had recent recruitments and whose district has already been featured in the magazine, kindly hand in the name and regiment of those who have joined the colours, so that no person's name may be omitted.

WHIST, TEA AND DANCE

The following were the prize-winners at the November whist, which was, as per usual highly successful and enjoyed by all.

Dominoes: Mrs Gill

Whist: Gents: 1st prize - Pat Letham (133)
2nd prize – Pat Doyle (127)
Ladies: 1st prize – Mrs Campbell (135)
2nd prize – Mrs Goldie (127)

One of our oldest parishioners, Mrs O'Neill, Woodview Terrace, passed to her eternal reward during the Christmas season. Aged 82, she was in her time what one would term among those who formed the backbone of the parish when it first came into being. May she rest in peace.

One more of the parochial veterans, in the person of Mrs Dowdells, aged 75, The Cross, Uddingston, has passed to her eternal reward. For a number of years she was confined to the house by an illness which was borne with Christian fortitude. May she rest in peace.

Post WW II activities

With the cessation of hostilities in 1945 and the gradual return of personnel from H.M. Forces, the spiritual and social life of the parish regained most its former vigour. High on the list of parochial activities in the post-war years were Fr McCann's Dramatic Club and Fr McGlinchey's choirs. The focal point for young people at that time was the League Hall where a wide variety of social and physical education activities were organised and conducted by Tommy Cassidy. Many former members of the Youth Club have vivid and humorous memories of holidays spent with Tommy and the Boy's Club at the Skerries Holiday Camp near Dublin.

In 1947 the parishioners of St John's paid fitting tribute to Fr McCarthy on reaching his Sacredotal Golden Jubilee – a great achievement in the life of a priest.

Other distinguished newcomers to Uddingston in 1949 were the Capuchins who established a community in 'Clydeside House' – a large house with stables, standing on the banks of the River Clyde – and now known as Greyfriars. Some of our

present parishioners will recall the tireless founder, Fr Kevin, and the many hours of back breaking labour they spent restoring the house and cultivating the gardens. The stable was later converted into a beautiful little chapel. Owing to a shortage of vocations and the difficulty of maintaining a community in Uddingston, the Capuchins reluctantly had to leave Greyfriars in January 1981, but happily were replaced by the Divine Word Missionaries and we sincerely hoped that their stay would be long and their quest for vocations will be fruitful. Sadly, due to increasing costs and decrease in numbers the Divine Word Missionaries left Greyfriars in 1998.

The departure of Bishop Scanlon to a new residence in Bothwell in 1956, heralded the arrival of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Uddingston. The Bishop's former residence in Douglas Gardens was taken over by Fr Frank O'Donnell, Fr Cullen and Fr Welsh as a Study House for postulants, and it is interesting to note that in 1957 one of their students was James Brown, from Viewpark, Uddingston. After his ordination Fr James went to Africa where he spent many years on missionary work.

During their seventeen years in Uddingston the Holy Ghost Fathers made many good friends in the parish where there was certainly all-round regret when the Order moved to Carfin in 1973. On his return from the Missions Fr Brown was appointed Superior of the new House in Carfin; some might claim that the Uddingston connections with the Holy Ghost Fathers has been maintained.

In 1954 Fr McCarthy's long service in the priesthood and the diocese was suitably rewarded when he was installed as a Canon of the recently erected Chapter of the Motherwell Diocese. Unfortunately, the Canon's active service was soon to end as failing health forced him to retire in 1957. The appointment of Fr John McQuade as Parish Administrator marked the beginning of a period of parochial growth and change that was to continue for many years; it was during his administration that the church was re-decorated, the stonework of the presbytery was cleaned and restored to its original state and the distribution of Communion at 12 o'clock Mass was introduced – an unprecedented practice in those days. The establishment of new industries and the building of new houses in the area were responsible for a significant increase in the congregation and a revival of the parochial vigour associated with pre-war days. These parochial changes, which had been warmly

welcomed and supported by the people, were greatly clouded by the death of Canon McCarthy in 1959 and the congregation were deeply moved at the passing of this pious, dedicated priest, who had given twenty-nine years of his priestly life to the parish.



Funeral of Cannon P McCarty who died on 15 March 1959, in the 62nd year of his priesthood and 86th year of his age. Fr Corless and Fr McQuade present



As a mark of respect to Cannon McCarthy, who had served St John the Baptist for 29 years, people lined the streets of Uddingston as he was moved to his final resting place at St Patrick's Cemetery, New Stevenson, Lanarkshire

Further renovation of the church and presbytery was carried out by Fr Bernard Keenan after he assumed charge of the parish in 1960; under his management the entrance to the church was given a 'new look' and measures were taken to reinforce the structure of the building which was then beginning to show its age and it is largely due to his foresight that the church is still standing today. This sound spiritual and material state of the parish on his departure in 1965 to St Cuthbert's, Burnbank, bore witness to the business-like efficiency of his ministry in Uddingston.

On his arrival in Uddingston Rev Dr Philip Boyce (1965-1981) was fortunate to have the support of Fr Thomas Gibbons who had already spent three years as a curate in the parish. His extrovert, cheery personality was the ideal complement for the studious, retiring nature of Dr Boyce and this formed the basis of a mutually respectful friendship that was to last for many years. Though Fr Gibbons made many valuable contributions to the spiritual and social development of the parish he was particularly successful in promoting the ecumenical movement in Uddingston and happily the fruits of his labours are still very much in evidence today.

Following the appointment of Fr Charles Docherty as curate in 1974, major alterations were made to the interior of the church to accommodate the liturgical changes of Vatican II; the communion rails were removed; the pulpit was re-positioned; a glass partitioned baby area was built and the High Altar was remodelled. In 1975 a new Parochial Hall was erected to provide a much needed replacement for the old League Hall which had been demolished to make way for Council house development in North British Road.

The liturgical changes in Vatican II were wide-ranging and challenging; years of traditional practice were altered or replaced and it was largely due to the spiritual direction of Dr Boyce and his curates Fr O'Leary and Fr O'Mahoney that these radical changes were given such ready acceptance by the people.

1981 was a memorable year for Dr Boyce; he celebrated his Golden Jubilee in the priesthood – a most fitting end to his demanding and fruitful sixteen years ministry in Uddingston – and entered a well earned period of retirement in St Monica's, Coatbridge, where his close friend and former curate, Fr Gibbons, was parish priest. Unfortunately, his retirement only lasted for eighteen months as he succumbed to a prolonged illness on 14th May 1983.

The appointment of Fr Sean Mannion as parish priest and Fr Brian Donnelly as curate to St John's in October 1981 had a rather hectic start; apart from the normal problems of settling into a new parish and organising Christmas services with a relatively unknown congregation, they had the added task of making preparations for the Papal Visit of Pope John Paul II in June 1982. However, a Papal Visit Committee was soon formed and with the assistance of Mrs Patricia Whyte as secretary matters were well in hand by the following March. Sadly Fr Mannion did not live to see his plans fulfilled as it was in the midst of all these activities that he was called to his eternal reward on the 10th March, 1982. The people of Uddingston and his former parishioners in St Thomas', Wishaw, were shocked and stunned by his sudden death at the age of 49, and it was a tribute to the tremendous impact of his short ministry as parish priest in St John's that, within hours of his death, the church was filled to capacity to mourn his passing.

The return of Fr Thomas Corless to St John's as parish priest in 1982 was regarded as a homecoming – he had already served as a curate in Uddingston from 1956 to 1960. However, many changes had taken place in his twenty-three year absence. With the demolition of old property in Uddingston many of his former parishioners had been re-housed in Bothwell but these losses had been off-set by council and private housing developments in and around the village. According to parochial estimates of 1982 the number of Catholics in the district is well in excess of 3,000 some 940 families in all. It is interesting to note that of all the priests who have served in Uddingston, Fr Corless is the only one to have had two appointments to the parish; it would seem appropriate, therefore, that he had the honour of leading the people of St John's in their Centenary celebrations.

What of the present? Uddingston is no longer a mining community; pits in and around the village have all closed down; unsanitary tenement buildings have been replaced by modern council houses; children no longer travel barefoot to a cold, poorly-lit school; childhood epidemics of diphtheria, scarlet fever, etc., have been controlled; transport is readily available – the church carpark is overcrowded at some Masses; the green fields of the Holm Brae, Tannochside, Birkenshaw and Kylepark have given way to council and private housing estates.

Changes in the spiritual and liturgical life of the parish have been no less dramatic. Mass is said in the vernacular and the congregation now participate in the responses and prayers, with the priest facing the people; the liturgy has been enhanced by congregational singing of hymns, traditional and modern; with the reduction of the Eucharist fast to one hour the number of communicants has exceeded all expectation; lay readers and special ministers of the Eucharist assist at Masses; evening Masses are regular occurrences and ecumenical services are encouraged.

What a transformation from the parish that was opened in 1883!

Today we have a living testimony of the spiritual leadership and inspiration of the many dedicated and devoted priests who have graced our parish; each in his time has given generously of his spiritual gifts and talents to build a parish of which we

can be justly proud. We have been equally blessed with many faithful parishioners who in their various ways have steadfastly supported our priests in fostering and nourishing the spiritual heritage we now possess. To these many priests and thousands of people we now extend our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude.

Whilst we rejoice and thank God for His blessings in the past and reflect on the spiritual impact of Pope John Paul's visit to Scotland in 1982, we are somewhat saddened by the ever growing shortage of vocations. We can no longer look to Belgium or Ireland for support as in former times; we are now dependent on our own resources. Therefore, if the spiritual impetus of Pope John Paul's visit is to be maintained and the visions of Vatican II are to be realised, we must earnestly pray that many more young people will answer the call to the priesthood or the religious life. Their generous response would also ensure that our parish would be as spiritually fruitful in the future as it has been in the past.

Centenary Celebrations

The Centenary Celebrations of St John the Baptist's Parish in 1983 were indeed a remarkable occasion. An occasion that provided parishioners with an opportunity to look back and thank God for the many blessings and graces bestowed on them since the humble beginnings of the parish in 1883.

As we move towards the next milestone of celebrating the 125th anniversary of our parish it is opportune to reflect on the events at and since our centenary.

The centenary of the parish was marked by Bishop Francis Thomson, Bishop of Motherwell, celebrating Mass on Sunday 26th June 1983. Very fittingly the celebration mass commenced with the hymn to our patron saint, "O sing that fearless prophet's praise". This was followed by the Penitential Rite and Gloria, both of which were sung. The first reading was taken from Isaiah ch 49, v 1-6, followed by Responsorial Psalm 138. The second reading was Acts ch 13, v 22-26, and the Gospel was Luke ch1 vs 57-66,80. Father Francis Darroch, a son of the parish, gave the homily. The Creed was sung in Latin; the Offertory hymn was "Gifts of bread and wine"; and Eucharistic Prayer III was used. The 'Our Father' and 'Lamb of

God' were sung and the communion hymns included "Be still and know that I am God"; "Glorious God, King of Creation"; "Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us" and "The Lord's my Shepherd". Bishop Thomson gave the final blessing and dismissal and the recessional hymn was "Thine be the Glory".

In the evening the social aspect of the Centenary Celebrations involved a dinner held at Mount Vernon Leisure Centre, where speeches were made by Fr Corless, Sheriff John J Maguire, James Hamilton M.P., Fr Leslie Hatfield - Devine Word Missionaries, Charles J Houston, Bishop Thomson and Dr Denis McKay.



Charlie Houston and Fr Leslie Hatfield at the Centenary celebrations

After the Centenary Celebrations, attention was once again turned to the building of a new church. It had been thirty years since the desire to build a new church was voiced. This challenge fell to Fr Corless when he was appointed Parish Priest in 1982. Parishioners were given an opportunity to comment on the design of the proposed new church and in due course were able to see the new church building come to fruition. This outstanding building came at a huge cost of £700,000. As their forebears had done, the parish community generated much activity to raise funds to off-set some of the costs. Reference to the Church Building Fund Statement of Accounts, shows a balance of £12,237 raised through efforts of numerous activities including the 300 Club, Jumble Sales, Parish Dances, Bingo, Sports Quiz, Mock Auction, Nativity Play and Historian Evening. At a Golden Oldie Disco, Davie Hay, Manager of Celtic Football Club and former parishioner, presented Fr Corless with a cheque for £1,500 on behalf of the Building Fund Committee (20 December 1986).

Building of the new church

Work on building the new church commenced in 1985. Unfortunately progress was hindered for several months by heavy autumn rains and severe winter frosts.



Adverse weather conditions impeded the progress of building work in 1985-86

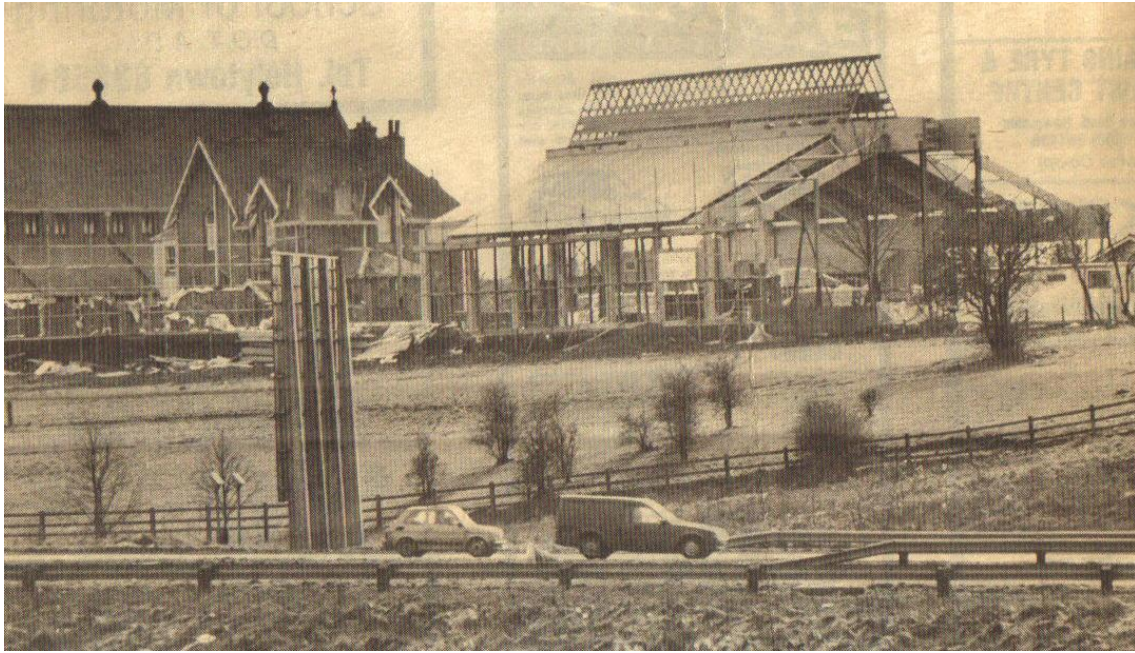


Weather conditions affected the speed of the building of the new church

A notable feature in the construction of the church was two very large roof beams, weighing 5 tons each and made of Swedish white pine wood. These beams were specially manufactured by Limtare, Lillehedan and imported from Denmark.



Roof structure of the new church in place
(Photo courtesy of the Bellshill Speaker)



The old church and chapel house sitting alongside the new church under construction, clearly visible from the M74
(Photo courtesy of the Bellshill Speaker)



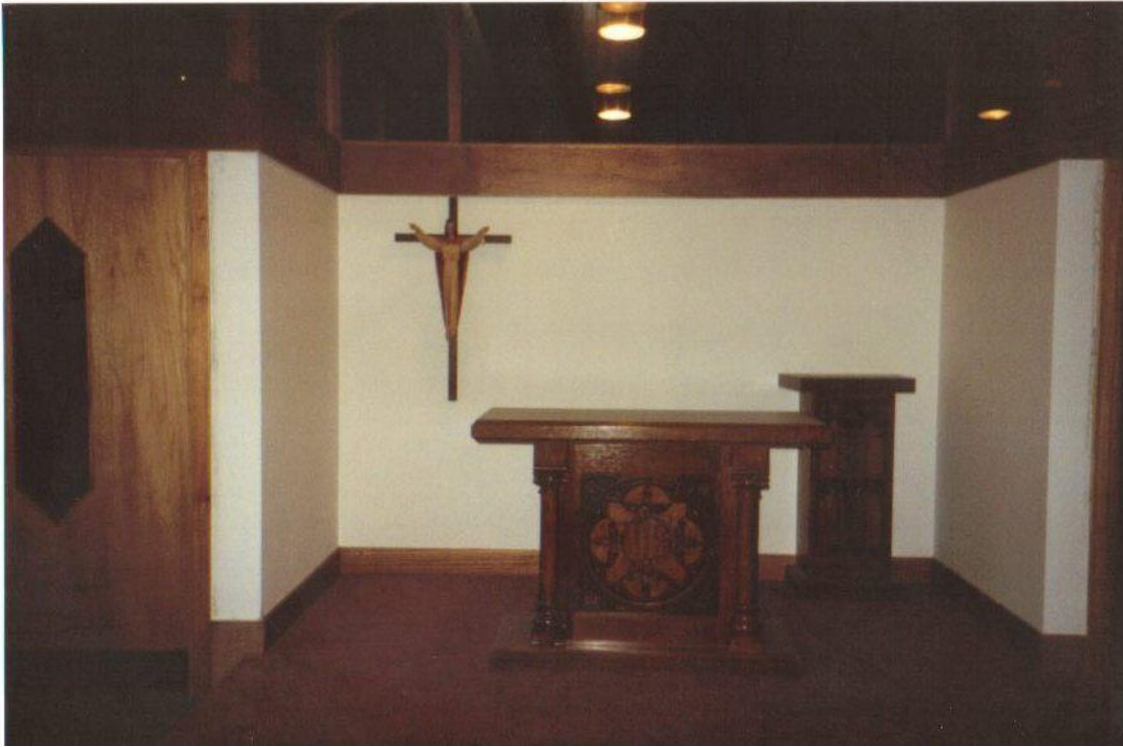
The new church nearing completion with the old chapel house still standing



The new church and chapel house nearing completion

Links with the old and new church

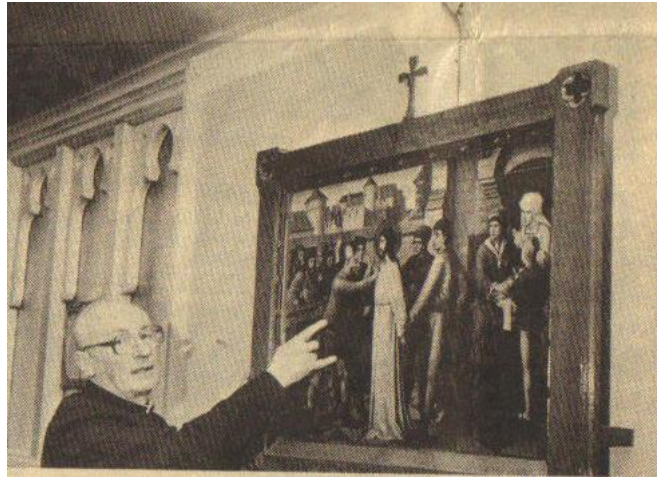
Although the old church was demolished, some artefacts were retained and incorporated into the new church. The Stations of the Cross, a set of fourteen paintings specially created for the opening of the old church in 1902 by the brother of Fr Beyaert P.P. (1898-1907), were hung in the new church. Of the three panels from the old altar, two were incorporated into the new altar, used in the weekday chapel; the third panel was used in the construction of the baptismal font. Panels from the pulpit were reconstructed to form the lectern and plinth for the tabernacle now used in the weekday chapel. The tabernacle, now situated in the weekday chapel, was also brought from the old church.



The day chapel altar constructed from two of the oak panels from the old altar

Also brought from the old church was a monstrance which is still used today.

During the early 1960's under the auspices of Fr Keenan there was an appeal to parishioners for a new ciborium. Rather than the usual request for finance, Fr Keenan asked for contributions of gold jewellery, which was melted down and reformed into the sacred vessel which is still in use today.



Fr Corless with Stations of the Cross, which were moved to the new church
(Photo courtesy of the Bellshill Speaker)

The new church consists of the main church, a weekday side-chapel accommodating 75 people and a cry-chapel, which seats 25 people, and two confessionals. In total the church seats 725 people. Due to the open design of the building there is an unrestricted view of the main altar, which is one of the main focal points of the church. The main altar is made of wood and has a hand carved depiction of the Last Supper, clearly visible from all aspects of the church. Behind the altar hangs a fifteen-foot high crucifix, a reminder of the ultimate sacrifice made for us all. The use of a variety of woods on the ceiling, seats and doors complements the simple brick interior.

1987 a memorable year

Mid January 1987 was a memorable week in the history of the parish. On Monday 19th January, Mass was celebrated for the last time in the building that had been the centre of the Catholic community in the area for 84 years. The principal celebrant at the final mass was Bishop Joseph Devine, Bishop of Motherwell. Two days later on Wednesday 21st January, Bishop Devine returned to Uddingston to concelebrate mass with Fr Corless and Fr Taylor, curate. A number of priests from the Diocese were in attendance to celebrate the first Mass in the newly completed church. For a very short time the new church stood alongside the old church. The new church building stands directly on the site of the first Chapel-School, and is a testament to the faith, loyalty and generosity of the parishioners through the years.

The Solemn Dedication of the Church took place several months later, on the patronal feast of St John the Baptist, Wednesday 24th June 1987. On this occasion Bishop Joseph Devine was again the principal celebrant and performed the Rite of Dedication, assisted by Fr Corless and Fr Taylor. Amongst a large number of concelebrants was Monsignor John Gillen, V.G; Fr Tom Gault, was Master of Ceremonies, and later to become an assistant in the parish; Fr Leo Cushley, who was ordained in the old church in 1985, anointed the walls of the new church. Fr Francis Darroch was present as was Fr Dr John McQuade, a former curate (1953-1959). Fr Brian Donnelly, former curate at the time of the centenary celebrations, gave the homily and traced the history of the parish, offered direction for the future and hoped in the forthcoming years many would come to worship and pray in this magnificent church. In his concluding remarks, Bishop Devine commented that the new church of St John the Baptist's, was truly a church of the 21st century and congratulated Fr Corless and Fr Taylor, the parishioners and all those who were involved in the design (Watson, Salmond & Gray, Architects), planning and construction of the church (Ogilvie Builders). Indeed the church building serves as a landmark for those who travel along the M74

Reference to the Order of Service for the Solemn Opening Mass shows that on this very joyous occasion the Entrance hymn was "On we go to Jerusalem", followed by the blessing and sprinkling of water. The Gloria was sung in Latin. The first reading was taken from Nehemiah ch 8, vs 2-6, 8-10. The Responsorial Psalm was John 6:63 and the second reading was Ephesians ch2, vs 19-22. The Gospel was Luke ch1, vs 57-66, 80. After the Creed was the Litany of Saints and a prayer of Dedication. Anointing and blessing of the altar and walls of the church followed. Incensation of the altar and church, and lighting of the altar took place. During communion "Yahweh, I know you are near"; "One Bread, one Body, one Lord of all", and "Soul of my Saviour" were sung. The recessional hymn was that of St John the Baptist, "O sing that fearless prophet's praise". The parish choir and folk group provided the music.

The building of the new church and the demolishing of the old church completed another chapter in the life of the parish.

Building of the new church hall

At the time of building the new church and chapel house the parish hall remained.

From our humble and austere beginnings in 1883, we are indebted to all the priests who have served in our parish. We also acknowledge the generations of parishioners who made sacrifices, both spiritually and materially, so that today we have a place of worship to be proud of, that is comfortable and welcoming to all who enter its doors.

Benemerenti Award

Throughout the many years of the parish, numerous people have contributed un-numbered hours of service. It has been by their dedication, example and sharing of talents that helped lay the foundations of a vibrant parish community. In recent years the church has acknowledged the contributions of the laity by the awarding of the Benemerenti medal. This Pontifical decoration began by Pope Gregory XVI in 1852 and was conferred in recognition of distinguished service in military or civil affairs. The military medal has on one side the image of Gregory XVI and on the other an angel bearing a scroll with the word Benemerenti (to a well-deserving person) under the papal emblems. The civil medal has Benemerenti surrounded by a crown of oak leaves engraved on its face side. They are worn on the breast, suspended by ribbons of the papal colours.

Priests who have served in St John the Baptist's Parish

See appendix xxxxxx

Parish Priests

| | |
|-----------|----------------------|
| 1883-1886 | Rev Denis McCarthy |
| 1887-1890 | Rev John L. Murphy |
| 1891–1897 | Rev Ronald Mortimer |
| 1898-1907 | Rev Arthur Beyaert |
| 1907-1930 | Rev James P. Towie |
| 1930-1959 | Rev Patrick McCarthy |
| 1959-1965 | Rev Bernard Keenan |
| 1965-1981 | Rev Dr Philip Boyce |
| 1981-1982 | Rev Sean Mannion |
| 1982-1990 | Rev Thomas Corless |
| 1990-2005 | Rev Robert Curley |
| 2005 | Rev Dominic Towey |

Curates – see appendix xx for additional information

| | |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 1899-1901 | Rev Matthew Burke |
| 1901-1902 | Rev Edward Mollumby |
| 1902-1908 | Rev John Walsh |
| 1903-1906 | Rev James McKenna |
| 1908-1909 | Rev Michael O'Boyle |
| 1909-1917 | Rev Patrick Reilly |
| 1910-1911 | Rev Edward Fitzgerald |
| 1918-1919 | Rev Charles McGlinchey |
| 1919-1921 | Rev Michael Ahearne |
| 1923-1926 | Rev Michael Barron |
| 1927-1935 | Rev Daniel O'Brien |
| 1928-1929 | Rev Archibald Watt |
| 1929-1930 | Rev James McGory |
| 1934-1943 | Rev William Forbes |
| 1935-1949 | Rev Patrick Heaney |
| 1949 | Rev Thomas Barry |
| 1944-1956 | Rev Peter McCann |
| 1950-1953 | Rev Daniel McGlinchey |
| 1954-1959 | Rev Dr John McQuade |
| 1956-1960 | Rev Thomas Corless |
| 1960-1961 | Rev Richard Lillis |
| 1962-1969 | Rev Thomas Gibbons |
| 1964-1968 | Rev John McIntyre |
| 1970-1973 | Rev Michael McCarthy |
| 1973-1974 | Rev Michael O'Leary |
| 1974-1976 | Rev Charles Docherty |
| 1977-1980 | Rev Cornelius O'Leary |
| 1980-1981 | Rev Humphrey O'Mahoney |
| 1981- 1985 | Rev Brian Donnelly |
| 1985 - 1992 | Rev Christopher Taylor |
| 1993 - 1997 | Rev Thomas Gault |

It is notable that since the mid 1990's no curate has been appointed and the parish has been served only one priest, the parish priest.

Vocations from the Parish

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Father John Baptist SDS (Edward Downey) | Salvatorian Fathers Professed 8 October 1935; Ordained Priest 23 May 1940 | Died: 29 November 1956 Interred at Christleton, Chester |
| Father Francis Darroch | Motherwell Dioceses | Parish Priest Our Lady and St Anne, Hamilton. Retired: - St Joseph's Home, Robroyston, Glasgow. |
| Father Patrick J. Byrne | Archdioceses of Glasgow | St Andrew's Cathedral |
| Father Patrick Burns | Verona Fathers | Malawi, Africa Mexico, Dublin |
| Brother Bartholomew (John Harkins) | Marist Brothers | South Africa (died 1981) |
| Monsignor Leo Cushley | Ordained in St John the Baptist by Bishop Joseph Devine, 7 July 1985. | Now serving in the Diplomatic Service of the Church |
| Father Jeremy Bath | | Parish Priest in Diocese of St Andrew's – Sts Mary and David, Hawick |
| Bartholomew Cannon | ?????? | Awaiting information |
| Father James Brown | Holy Ghost Fathers | After many years of service in Africa, now serving in Regional House, Carfin |
| Sister Mary Carmel (Mary Downey) | Congregation of the Good Shepherd | Bangalore, India |
| Sister Charles (Philomena Kelly) | Franciscan Missionaries of the Devine Motherhood | Surrey, England Where else???? |

| | | |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Sister Mary Catherine (Delia McAuley) | Little Sisters of the Poor | Albany, N.Y. U.S.A. |
| Sister Theresa Frances (Sandra McAuley) | Little Sisters of the Poor | Congo, Africa |