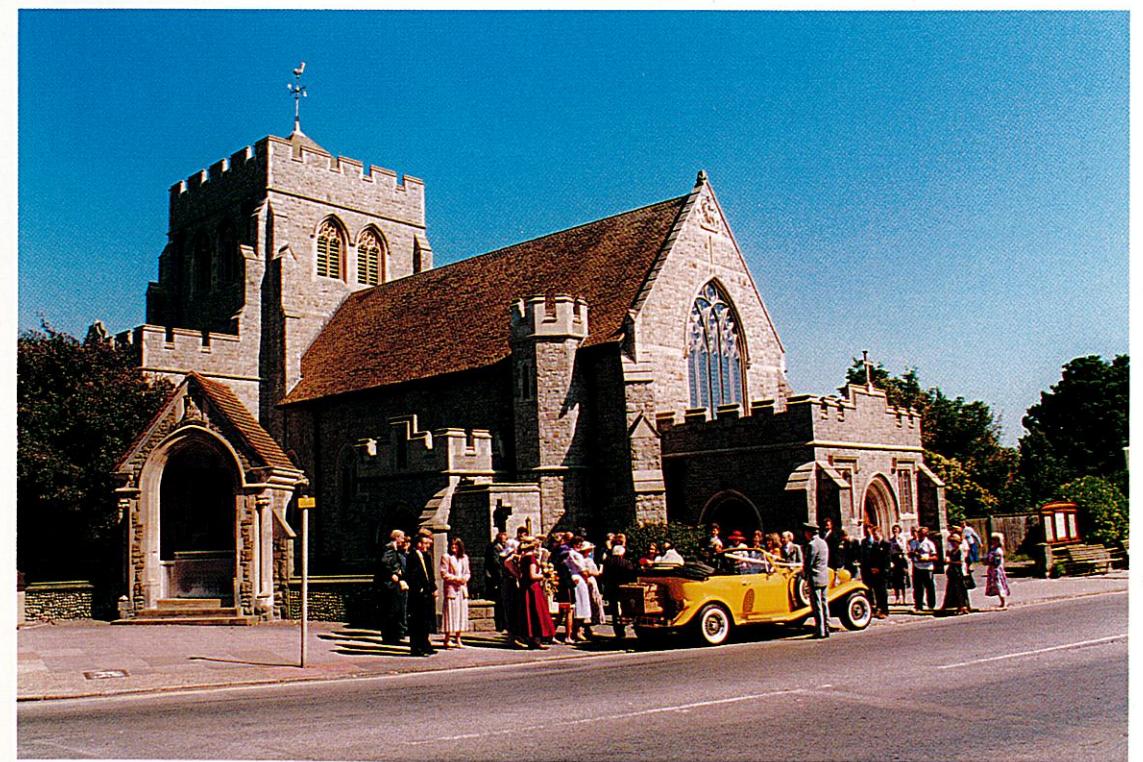




*St. Mary Magdalene's Parish
Bexhill - on - Sea
1893 - 1993*



Price: £3

Introduction

It is one hundred years since the first Mass was celebrated and a very suitable moment to give thanks to God for all that has been achieved in the parish over such a long period.

It is good to recall that the first Mass was celebrated by Fr. Richard Bone, I.C. in July 1893, and I would like to record the very great debt of gratitude that the Church in that part of the country owes to the Rosminian Fathers.

Successive Priests and Brothers together with the Rosminian Sisters of Providence have devoted themselves to the mission of the Church in the Bexhill area since that time and I am very happy indeed to have the Institute in my Diocese.

May God bless the Priests and People of St. Mary Magdalene's Parish on the occasion of its Centenary and I assure you of my prayers for the continuance of a fruitful mission and apostolate in the years to come.

+
Cormac

Rt. Rev. Cormac Murphy-O'Connor
Bishop of Arundel and Brighton.



Bishop Cormac Murphy - O'Connor and Fr. Dennis Hare, I.C. enter the church for the Centenary Mass of Thanksgiving on July 6th 1993.

A Message from the Parish Priest

Father Peter Reynolds

A history of any Catholic Church, is the story of the People of God. In every respect Bexhill has much to celebrate in this centenary year of the first Mass to be said on the Bexhill Mission. This was on the 13th of July 1893.

The Mass fulfils our need to praise God in our daily lives. Successive generations have brought their children to this Church to celebrate the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Matrimony.

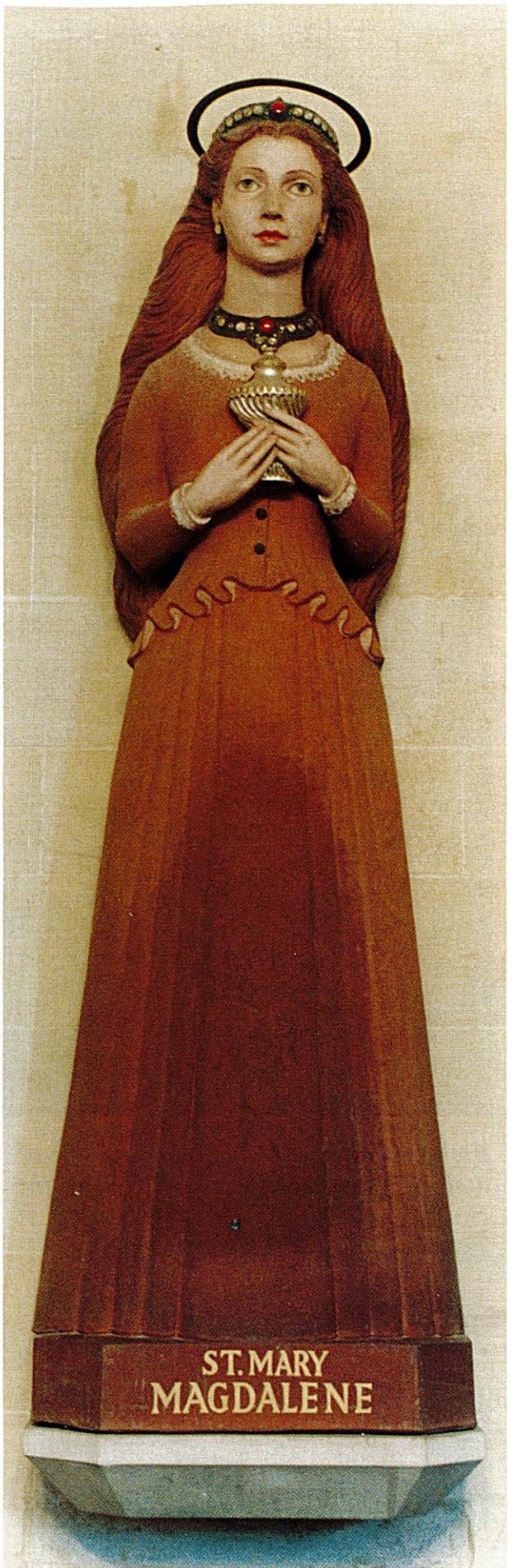
Our gratitude is expressed to the priests and people who have gone before us who have made it possible for us to mark this milestone in the history of the Catholic Church in Bexhill. We recall their vision as we celebrate the decade of evangelisation. Bishop Cormac, in his book "The Family of the Church" writes:

"The Church is at once the community we build together - we are the Church - and the womb that carries us, the maternal community that begets us to the life of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit."

In this year's Pastoral Letter for Pentecost Sunday Bishop Cormac said;

"The religious are a most valued part of the life of the Diocese and I want here not only to pay tribute to them but to remind you how much we should cherish them. They remind us of our need for family and community within our broken world. They remind us that all our parishes should be communities where we try to live as brothers and sisters of the one Lord."

Let us thank God for His many blessings and live our faith with pride and confidence.



100 Years at Bexhill

The Parish of St. Mary Magdalene was established in 1893 by a Religious Order of priests and brothers, called The Institute of Charity - better known as The Rosminians, after the name of their saintly founder Antonio Rosmini. The following brief outline of Fr. Rosmini and the work of his Congregation sets the scene for a more detailed look at the founding of the Mission in Bexhill.

Antonio Rosmini was born in north Italy in 1797. He was a man of deep faith and of immense intellectual gifts. Ordained at the age of 24, he felt called by God to a life of study and of writing in the service of the Church.

However, Providence was soon to call him to found a religious order, and when Pope Gregory XVI gave his official approval to the new Congregation, he described Rosmini as:

"A man of excellent and pre-eminent genius, adorned with extraordinary gifts of mind, illustrious in the highest degree for knowledge of things divine and human, but not less remarkable for his piety, religion, virtue, prudence, and for his wonderful zeal for the Catholic religion and towards the Apostolic See."

Rosmini died at Stresa on July 1st 1855, the feast of the Precious Blood.

In 1972 Pope Paul VI spoke warmly of Fr. Rosmini:

"Rosmini was indeed a great man but one, as yet too little known. The author of 93 books full of profound thought, covering the whole field of human knowledge - philosophy, morals, politics, sociology, the supernatural, religion and ascetics."

Rosmini was also a prophet. In one of his books, entitled "The Five Wounds of the Church" Rosmini foresaw the participation of the laity in the Liturgy. This was at a time when the Church looked askance at having its shortcomings and weaknesses aired in public. All Rosmini's thought points to a spirit that merits being known, imitated and perhaps being invoked as a protector in heaven. I heartily look forward to the day when it is."

Rosmini's new congregation soon began to expand, and in 1835, at the invitation of Bishop Baines, he sent a small band of three men to England. Fathers Anthony Rey and Emilius Belys were French, and Dr. Luigi Gentili was one of Fr. Rosmini's earliest Italian companions in the Institute of Charity.

These men were filled with missionary zeal. Space allows only the briefest outline of some of their work. But, to take Fr. Gentili as an outstanding example - in eight years he preached fifty missions of a fortnight or more in most of the

major towns - London, Manchester, Birmingham, Derby, Nottingham, Newcastle, Sheffield, Coventry, Bristol, Newport, Huddersfield, Bradford, Hull, Leeds, Leicester, Lemmington, Worksop, York and Preston. He also preached nearly forty retreats to clergy and religious, as well as numerous private retreats to Bishops, and, in the last sixteen months of his life he preached about 800 sermons. By the time of his death in Ireland from 'famine fever' in 1848, he had received nearly three thousand converts into the Church.

Gentili's Legacy and Innovations

Many of our Catholic practices and devotions were introduced or re-introduced to this country by Gentili and his fellow Rosminians. These include the wearing of the Roman, clerical collar (the "dog collar"), clerical dress - cassock, cincture and biretta, public missions and retreats, the renewal of baptismal vows, public processions of the Blessed Sacrament, the Forty Hours Devotion, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, May devotions and public processions in honour of Our Lady, the Easter Blessing of houses and the wearing of scapulars and medals.

Foundation of the Bexhill Mission

The foundation of the Parish of St. Mary Magdalene was entrusted to the Institute of Charity. This is how it came about.

Nine years after their arrival at Tilbury, the Rosminians had opened a Public School at Ratcliffe College near Leicester in 1844. It was originally intended to be a Novitiate House - near to Loughborough, the scene of their early missionary work. But it soon became clear to Gentili and Rosmini that, with university education closed to all Catholics at this time, there was a need for a college in the area to prepare young men for business and the professions.

The first pupil to be admitted to the new College was a young man called John Foy. Some years later he was ordained priest for the Southwark Diocese. His parish extended from Eastbourne in the west to Lydd in the east, and as far inland as Wadhurst. He retired in September 1893 and moved from St. Leonards to Bexhill where he died in July 1894.

Fr. Foy was evidently quite a forceful character, controversial at times, and quite prepared to appear on political platforms to argue the issues of the day. He caused some local consternation when, at the general election of 1880, he publicly transferred his support for the Liberals to the Conservatives. He appears to have been a natural leader and a guiding force in the young community with an acknowledged influence in the religious life of East Sussex.

Now we turn to another name, William Lockhart. He was the son of an Anglican clergyman, and a student at Magdalen College, Oxford. Archdeacon Manning (later Cardinal) advised Lockhart to go and stay with Newman at Littlemore to prepare for his reception of Anglican Orders. (The Oxford Movement was at its height.) Lockhart received Deacon's Orders in 1842, but from the questions he was asking about Papal authority, Confessions and the like, Newman knew that Lockhart could not stay at Littlemore.

Lockhart went to Loughborough and was soon received into the Catholic Church by Father Gentili. Three days later he entered the Rosminian Novitiate. In 1845 he was ordained to the Priesthood. When Newman (later Cardinal Newman) heard of his defection to Rome, he delivered his famous sermon on "The parting of friends".

In 1856, Father Lockhart founded the Mission of Our Lady and St. Joseph at Kingsland in north London. Manning (now the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster) invited Lockhart and his companions to take charge of the missions of Saffron Hill and Baldwin's Gardens. Further missions were added, both in London (St. Etheldreda's, Ely Place, Holborn) and in other parts of England - chiefly in the Midlands and the industrial North.

Lockhart realised that the Fathers and Brothers of the Institute of Charity who were all busily at work in some of the poorest slums in the country, needed a house of rest, preferably by the sea.

At this time Bishop Butt of the Southwark Diocese was asked by Father Foy if the Rosminians could be invited to take over the Mission of Bexhill. Father Foy had come to know the Rosminians while he was a student at Ratcliffe. For his part, Father Lockhart had happy memories of this part of the country - he had lived with his mother in Hastings as a young man after the death of his father.

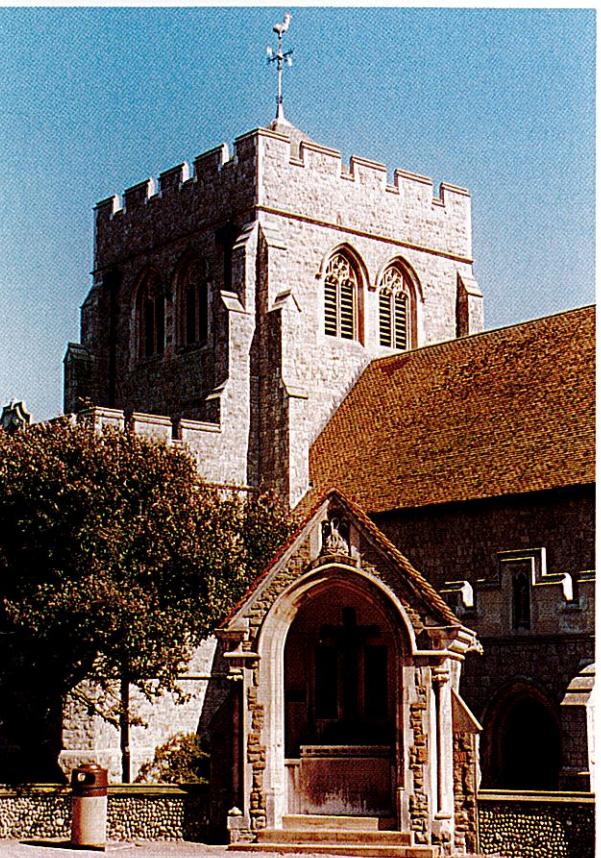
So the Mission was begun. It was to be named after Father Lockhart's Oxford College - Saint Mary Magdalen. The early work was entrusted to Father Richard Bone and Father Ward. They bought the site for the Church and Mission from Mr. Young who drew up the plans. When the building was completed the first Mass was celebrated in the Chapel, which was intended to be a future school - room (now the hall) on July 13th 1893. Father Bone was the Celebrant and Mr. Edward Belasis, of the Lancaster Herald was the server. The Institute of Charity had arrived in Bexhill and the association remains unbroken to this day. Thanks be to God!

St. Mary Magdalene's Church Continued from Page. 11.....

The war memorial at the corner of Sea Road and Magdalen Road, the first public war memorial to be erected in Bexhill, was designed by Mr. G.H. Gray, Mayor of the borough 1918 - 1920. It was unveiled in November 1919. For many years the war dead were honoured on Armistice Day with a service of prayer which included the sounding of the last post and the two minutes silence.

This practice is still continued to this day, albeit in a modified form.

In 1961 the local firm of E. Godwin & Sons added a Baptistry to the church and two years later the porch.



Bexhill Mission Clergy 1893 - 1993

This list is as accurate as our records permit. However, it is not the whole story. Since the foundation of the parish it has been customary for the community to include brethren who were not ordained. These men, called brothers, were often the backbone of the community. They worked in the house as cooks, housekeepers, handymen, infirmarians, sacristans, book keepers, tailors and vestment makers. The house at Bexhill in the early days was used as a holiday venue for our brethren from other houses - especially London. The house diary lists many guests (lay as well as clerical) who came to the house for business or rest and recuperation. It would seem that many of the Brothers would come to help at St. Mary Magdalene's (often from our large community house at Wadhurst) for short periods of time whenever there was a special need. Consequently it is not easy to give an accurate list of those who were assigned to this community. However, we do know of four men who spent many years here - Bros. Joshua Delaney, Alexander Baxter, Timothy Mahoney and Anthony Wehlre. Their names are included in recognition of their invaluable contribution to the work of the Bexhill Mission.

1893 -	Richard Bone	1943 -	Edward J. Hobson	1973 -	Maurice Stokes
1902	Richard Richardson	1952	James MacArevey	1982	Patrick G. Downey
	Daniel Hickey		W. Gilbert Jones		Bernard P. Nann
	Edmund Butcher		Richard Huyshe		Douglas Walsh
	Michael Garelli		Denis Honan		Lance G. Hurdidge
	Launcelot Scott		Geoffrey E. Smith		John Brennan
	Philip J. Barrows		Charles Cunningham		E. Raymond Wilcox
	Alfred C. Knight		William J. Smith		John Whelton
	E. Hobson		Daniel Moynihan		
			Arthur Holland	1982	John Whelton
1903 -	Alfred C. Knight		Bernard Holland		E. Raymond Wilcox
1912	Michael Garelli		Maurice T. Stokes		Lance G. Hurdidge
	James Whelan			1983 -	John Whelton
	Patrick Hayes	1953 -	Geoffrey E. Smith	1986	E. Raymond Wilcox
	Peter Cerutti	1962	Bernard Holland		Kenneth E. Casey
	Herbert E. Cox		Patrick G. Forde		Keith E. Tomlinson
	Joseph Kennedy		John J. O'Neil	1987 -	John Whelton
	Ernest King		John A. McKernan	1990	E. Raymond Wilcox
	John G. Fevez	1962	John E. Walker		Kenneth E. Casey
1913 -	Joseph Kennedy		Daniel Moynihan		Keith E. Tomlinson
1922	John G. Fevez		William J. Smith		R. Peter Fenwick
	L'Abbe Julian Sas	1963 -	John E. Walker	1990	John Whelton
	Aloysius Emery	1972	Daniel Moynihan		E. Raymond Wilcox
	Michael J. Thomas		William J. Smith		Keith E. Tomlinson
	Edward J. Hobson		Dennis Horgan		R. Peter Fenwick
	William Pollard		Maurice J. Stokes		Peter Reynolds
	James McGinn		John G. Davies	1991	John Whelton
	Thomas Nolan		Thomas Driscoll		E. Raymond Wilcox
1923 -	William Pollard		Edward J. O'Neill		Peter Reynolds
1932	John Guise		John Lynch		R. Peter Fenwick
	Edward J. Hobson		John J. O'Dwyer		Eugene E. Monaghan
	Edwin Cunningham		Patrick Downey	1992 -	Peter Reynolds
1933 -	Edward J. Hobson		Peter Eddy	1993	E. Raymond Wilcox
1942	Edwin Cunningham		Bernard P. Nann		R. Peter Fenwick
	Richard Fowle		Douglas Walsh		Eugene E. Monaghan
	John O'Neill				
	Daniel J. Payne				
	James B. Kelleher				
	James MacArevey				

Extracts from the House Diary

"St. Mary Magdalen pray for us 1893" So begins the parish diary - the official record of the parish - which has been kept by successive Rectors of the Bexhill Mission since its foundation. The contents of the diaries reflect the times in which they were written, as well as the character of the men who wrote them. Some Rectors were clearly assiduous and expansive diarists, others were more laconic. Consequently the entries vary - from the detailed and daily reports of domestic matters to intermittent and frustratingly incomplete references to matters of considerable importance. Taken together, these pages from the past provide a fascinating insight into the problems which faced both priests and people through the years. A selection of entries has been reproduced here to give a general picture of the past hundred years of our community.

1893:

July 13th: Fr. Bone said the first Mass. Mr. Bellasis served.
July 23rd: Sunday Mass 8.30. 44 present. Evening 6.30. 50 present. Benediction for the first time.

August 30th: Fr. Richardson arrives to take charge of the Mission.

Sept. 2nd: Brother Winter arrives as Bro. in the house - and the servant leaves.

Sept. 28th: Received the first convert into the Church - Mrs. Witty, Perry Lodge, East Sheen.

Dec. 21st: The Nuns of the Holy Child gave us a lot of carpets and curtains, 6 large candlesticks from their High Altar, and two preaching stoles.....

Dec. 22nd: Mr. Lee sent us a dozen of port and a box of Xmas fare - Turkey etc.

Dec. 25th: Low Mass at Midnight. Choir sang See amid the winter snow, and Adeste Fideles for Offertory.

1894

April 20th: Angelus Bell arrived. Cost - £44.8/6d, fixing included.

April 22nd: Angelus rung for first time.

May 21st: Caught a robber in the Church trying to break open the alms box. Sent to prison for 4 months.

July 22nd: Frs. Whelan, Emery and Bros. Bailey and Whirly came to sing High Mass for the feast of Patron St. Mary Magdalen. In the evening an At Home, about forty came including several Protestants.

We had piano and some singing and readings.

Sept. 9th: We are paying 26/- a ton for coal at this time.

Oct. 10th: Ed Boniface came to act as lay brother @ £10 a year. He left soon after and a Mr. Thompson came in his place.

Oct. 30th: Said Mass for first time at the Nazareth House.

Nov. 23rd: Blessed the new Tabernacle at the Nazareth House today.

This year 1150 Communions.

1895

April 24th: Report sent to Bishop for 1894 & 1895:

Parishioners 57, Religious 10, Inmates (Naz. House?) 68 -135.

June 28th: Fr. Richardson went to the laying of the foundation stone of Westminster Cathedral.

July 1st: Fr. Hickey arrived to supply for Nazareth House.

July 16th: Four boys from Ely Place sang for the anniversary of the first Mass.

Sept. 10th: Father Bone left for Market Weighton.

1896

Jan 24th: Lecture on "Monasteries" in Victoria Hall by Fr. Richardson.

April 9th: Fr. Richardson lectures on Carthusian Monasteries for Nazareth House. £20 profit handed to the Sisters.

June 5th: The lawyers of Mr. Burke decide to ask £2000 for half an acre, running alongside Church (now Magdalen Road) - which was refused absolutely.

June 9th: Mary O'Leary came as Housekeeper. £18 per annum.

June 11th: Fr. Richardson goes to meet the Bishop at dinner given by Jesuits at Hollington Park.

July 26th Sunday: Patronal Feast kept today. Boys from Ely Place sing Gounod's "Messe Solenelle".

1897

Jan 6th: Congregational Reunion. All invited. Tea, songs, games, recitation.

May 14th: Prince Maximilian of Germany with Fr. Grady dined here today.

During this time Fr. Richardson was often absent on preaching engagements - retreats and missions in Carlisle, York, Leicester and Manchester.

During this time, housekeepers, servants and organists came and left with some frequency and regularity!

Nov. 30th: Went to Battle today to get the church licensed for Marriages, when completed.

Cost £3. The Church was certified for public worship on Feb. 1st 1895 and for Marriages on Dec. 8th 1897.

Dec. 28th: Fr. Richardson went to a funeral, caught cold and laid up with pneumonia for a month.

1898

Feb. 28th: Bro. Barrows joins the community.

Brother Barrows was an experienced tailor. He made both the purple and white set of vestments still being used at St. Mary Magdalene's

June 17th: Mr. Young, architect, visited us.

June 27th: Bishop said Mass here and wrote a letter of high appreciation of the services of the Institute and approved designs of New Church.

1899

March 27th: Wrote to Inspecting Commander of Coastguards at Hastings for Stipends for 4 Coastguards (£2) due 31st March every year.

April 18th: Frs. Garelli and Richardson went to the Synod at Southwark.

May 6th: Fr. Provincial blessed Oratory of our Sisters at Cranfield Road and said the first Mass.

June 3rd: Fr. Richardson gives Nuns' Retreat at Nazareth House. Offered 5 Guineas.

Accepts 2 Gns

Dec. 7th: Communions this yr. 2600, Easter Duties 140

1900

Feb. 23rd: Began to take 12 "Catholic Times"

March 9th: "Catholic Times" given up.

April 9th: Alms box at church door broken open and all contents taken. probably not much.

April 30th: Ellen O'Neill, servant, came today at £10 per annum.

June 18th: Bro. Barrows began to go to Mrs. McDonald, St. Leonards, to make complete set of vestments and continued for some weeks until finished. They are very fine white silk.

1901

July 7th: The Bishop arrived at 5.30 in Mrs. McDonald's Carriage for his visitation and to give Confirmation.....58 persons confirmed.

July 8th: Mary Foote the new housemaid arrived to day. She sent her boxes before her. 4/9d carriage to be paid on them. She is engaged at £12 per annum.

1902

March 27-29th: Fr. Knight carried out the functions of these days (ie Easter Triduum) to the full and the choir did very fairly on each occasion.

On H. Saturday morning the service commenced at eight and ended a little after eleven - the Congregation was not large.

1903

Feb. 19th: Fr. Whelan and Bro. Clarkson go to London en route for Rugby to assist at celebrations tomorrow of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Institute of Charity.

1904

Jan 3rd: Altar boys (13) to tea.

April 25th: News arrives of Fr. Garelli's death. R.I.P

June 1st: Dr. Casartelli, Bishop of Salford comes.

Sept. 21st: Fr. P. Cerutti comes to take up duties as Chaplain to Nazareth House.

Oct. 4th: The Bishop comes to make his visitation and to give Confirmation- 84 are confirmed, 33 of the Mission and 51 from Nazareth house. Everything passed off well without a hitch.

1905

July 16th: The new church begun. Fr. Knight urged in vain that the nave should be 10 ft wider (*how right he was!*) and that there should be no west end gallery.

Nov. 11th: Mr. J.M. Glover, the newly elected Catholic Mayor, attended Mass. As the Corporation did not accept his invitation to come with him, he attended privately.

Nov. 13th: Fr. Knight laid the foundation stone of the new church. Under the stone were deposited:

1) earth from Jerusalem,

2) some from the place where St. Peter wept bitterly, some from the Mount of Olives, and the Mammertime prison,

3) a piece of marble from the catacombs,

4) stones from the ruins of St. Augustine's at Canterbury,

5) a stone from Battle Abbey Church, a stone and moss from St. Winefride's Well,

6) a large Agnus Dei,

7) various medals, a Rosary etc.

8) The following inscription;

"On the Ides of December, being the feast of St Lucy, Virgin and Martyr, in the year of our salvation, 1906, Pius X being the Sovereign Pontiff, Peter Bishop of this diocese of Southwark, the first stone of this church dedicated to God under the invocation of the glorious penitent Mary Magdalen was laid by Father A. C. Knight, priest of the Institute of Charity. The expenses of building this church are defrayed by the above Institute whose present General is Bernardino Balsari, Aloysius Emery being Provincial of the English Province of St. Thomas of Canterbury. At this time James M. Glover is Mayor of Bexhill-on-Sea, the Duke of Norfolk is Lord Lieutenant of the County of Sussex and Edward VII is King of Great Britain."

Dec 30th: The Altar Servers had tea.

1907

Jan 4th: The Rev M. Derbyshire Subdeacon arrived sent by the Bishop of Southwark for his health.

Jan 6th: The Choirmen had supper.

Jan 29th: At night a tramp was found asleep in the porch and given into the hands of the police.

Feb 15th: Fr Knight went to the Requiem for Cardinal Wiseman and returned the same day.

During this period, Mr Young, the architect of the new church, made frequent visits to the parish.

April 29th: Fr. Knight went to Boulogne and returned the same day.

Aug 4th: Fr. Knight sang the first Mass in the new church. There were no doors nor windows nor floor, but on account of the number of visitors it was necessary. The Mass was sung at the altar of our Lady of Pity which was given by Mr Sleeman.

Sept 7th: Placed under the steps of the High Altar in the new church - stones from a pillar in Canterbury Cathedral; St. Peter's Monastery Canterbury; Cardinal Pole's tomb; Lady Chapel and Bishop Allcock's Chapel Ely Cathedral; Blessed Juliana's Cell, Norwich; Cathedral Cloisters Norwich; Peterborough Cathedral and St. Peter's church Bexhill.

Oct 13th: Fr. Knight celebrated the first Mass at the unfinished High Altar in the new church.

Oct 24th: At 7 a.m. Fr. Knight blessed the new church according to the Ritual. At 11 a.m. Fr. Provincial sang High Mass in the presence of the Bishop. The Bishop of Salford preached and there were about 40 priests present. The Catholic Mayor, Mr. Glover, and the Town Clerk attended in their robes. Very many Catholics and protestants from Bexhill and the neighbouring towns assisted at the Mass. Afterwards there was lunch for the clergy and their friends at the Granville Hotel.

Dec 8th: The Blessed Sacrament was reserved in the new church for the first time. Compline sung and Benediction given for the first time.

Dec 9th: The last Mass in the old church.

Dec 10th: The first Low Mass in the new church.

Dec 15th: The first Baptism in the new church. There is no font yet.

1908

Jan 13th: The first Mass in the Crypt. The School opened in the old church.

April 4th: The votive candle money box in St. Wilfred's Chapel was found broken open and robbed.

April 5th: Attempt made to force south door of back porch.

April 6th: A second attempt made; also an attempt made to force door between Sacristy and St. Wilfred's Chapel. The Police remained two nights concealed

on the premises but discovered nothing.

April 6th: The stone Credence Table inlaid with marbles from the Catacombs erected at the High Altar.

Oct 18th: Statues of SS Wilfred and Richard unveiled and blessed by Fr. Kennedy at evening service.

Dec. 29th: Had little boarders from Templemore to tea.

1909

Jan 17th: By special permission of the H. Father to this diocese we had a sung Requiem on Sunday for the sufferers of the earthquake in Italy. Collection made. Total collected £12.3/6d.

April 20th: Sent Lenten returns to Bishop. Approx no. Catholics 450 including Nazareth House. Baptisms- 19. Converts-none. Total Communions in 1908-8440. Av. No. at two Masses-175.

June 10th: 23 brothers and servers came from Wadhurst for the day. Solemn High Mass. At 5.30 Solemn Vespers followed by procession of the Blessed Sacrament which was carried by Fr. Boniface. First procession of Blessed Sacrament since the reformation. Great success.

Aug 18th: Fr. Kennedy took several members of Blessed Sacrament Guild to Wadhurst - enjoyable day.

1910

Jan 23rd: Ben. for the first time at Reredos with new monstrance. **Feb 16th:** Sent to L. Mayor (London) Fund for Paris Floods - £8.9/6d - collected by a few people.

May 7th: King Edward VII died at midnight 6th.

May 8th: 1 hour's exposition of the Blessed Sacrament to pray for the Royal Family.

July 13th: Bishop Amigo of Southwark stayed the night and said 8 a.m. Mass.

Dec. 14th: Confirmation given by Bishop Amigo - 83 presented for the Sacrament. Consecration of two chalices.

Dec.31st: Fr. Kennedy taken ill with rheumatic fever.

1911

Jan 26th: Very successful Whist Drive (Catholic) in Granville Hotel.

May 10th: Bought 2 manual organ for £17. (Wow!)

June 22nd: Coronation Day. Bishop Casartelli and Sir J. Blunt assisted in giving medals to the school children.

Oct 8th: Fr. Cox sang the Mass at the opening of the new chapel at Nazareth House. Lent vestments and cope for the occasion.

1912

March 3rd: New East Window unveiled and blessed.

1913

Jan 23rd: Fr. K. to Ashburnham to assist at Earl's funeral. Cardinal Bourne, Bishops of Southwark and Northampton there.

Jan 30th: Fr. K went with Miss Francis and others to see organ at Morgan & Smith Brighton.

March 22nd: After blessing of Font, Fr. K. blessed new organ, the gift of Miss Francis-£440. Played at the Gloria for the first time.

May 25th: Had first open air procession carrying the statue of our Lady of Lourdes (present from Miss Francis). About 250 persons took part. Very much admired.

Sept 10th: Consecration of our church. Consecrating Bishop-Peter Amigo, assisted by Bp of Salford, L. Casartelli. M.C. Dr Allanson. Function began at 9.00, ended about 12.45. Beautiful day - all went well. Luncheon at Granville - about 40 sat down.

Afterwards reception and garden party at Manor House by Miss Du Mond. Most successful - practically all the congregation there.

Oct 30th: 16 oak benches arrived for church.

1914

June 17th: New range placed in kitchen.

June 25th: Bishop Casartelli to lunch to meet Fr. General and Fr. Provincial(Emery).

Aug 4th: The Great War started; from the first day of war we have Benediction each evening with official prayers. Great excitement and enthusiasm in the country.

Aug. 20th: Pope Pius X died at midday R.I.P. Pope Benedict XV elected.

Sept 20th: During this time many refugees of all classes came to the town from Belgium. L'Abbe Sas of Malines among them.

Oct.11th: Fr. K. commenced to say Sunday Mass in Cooden for the 3000 new Soldiers.

Dec.1st: Statues of Blessed John Fisher and Edmund Campion put in church.

Dec 25th: Xmas Day. At midnight Mass church overcrowded. 300 at Communion. This past year is most of all note - worthy as the year which saw the Great War begin on Aug. 4th.

1915

Jan 1st: The year opened with the country under the cloud of the Great War. Some 160 Belgian refugees are in the town. About 3000 soldiers are in training here. Fr. Kennedy says Mass at Cooden camp on Sundays. The town is in darkness at night - for fear of airship raids.

April 29th: Fr. Kennedy receives appointment as acting Chaplain to 121st Infantry Brigade - £1.1.0 per Sunday.

Oct 13th: First air raid on London. Much damage. Some bombs also dropped on T. Wells and Frant.

Nov.13th: Sold organ to N.H.

Nov 24th: Fr. K in motor to Wadhurst. (first mention !)

1916

The year opens with the Great War raging throughout Europe. The end not yet in sight. Practically all men of military age have been enlisted, and there is likelihood of service being made compulsory for those still hanging back. Cooden camp is now principal depot for heavy artillery, and there are some 200 Catholic soldiers, mainly Irish.

1917

Still another year opens with the Great War ravaging the world. There is much talk of peace but little signs of its coming. Food prices are up 50%. The S.Eastern line from here to Crowhurst has been ripped up and the metals taken to France. 3000 men at Cooden Camp and 18000 wounded Canadians are billeted at Hastings & Saint Leonards.

July 26th: Sudden orders at camp for large draft of men for the front. Fr. K at camp to pacify the men who had been refused B.E.F leave. Evening Benediction & H.C. to some 40 men. Extremely edifying and touching sight.

1918

Feb.18th: Fr. Fevez appointed as Chaplain to the Forces, goes up to London to get his kit.

April 19th: Telephone installed to put us in touch with Cooden camp. Expenses paid by Canadian Government! This month a motor bicycle was purchased to enable Fr. Cronin to carry out more promptly and efficiently his duties as chaplain at Cooden camp.

Sept 29th: Te Deum sung after Mass in thanksgiving for the recovery of Palestine from the Turks and for the series of victories during the last week.

Oct 21st: The disease commonly called influenza, so prevalent in European and other countries, has been less virulent in Bexhill than elsewhere. Fr. Cronin anointed 36 Canadians, then spent three days in bed himself.

Nov 11th: On a dull day as far as the weather was concerned, came the cheerful news that Germany had signed the Armistice and that hostilities had ceased.

Nov. 12th: Solemn High Mass of Thanksgiving, followed by singing of the Te Deum and the National Anthems of England, Belgium and France. Both yesterday and today were, for most people, public holidays.

1921

March 25th: Good Friday. It is to

be noted for a precedent that the Deacon read the Passion in English; the Cross was put on the altar rail steps for the people to kiss, and that it would be well if they were told to come up in single file and to break into two's on each side of the cross. It lay too low for old people.

1922

Feb 2nd: A new agreement made with the Organist, Mr Cope - that he undertake the full duties of organist and choirmaster...for the payment of £50 a year. Bro. Delaney gave up the duties of choirmaster, but remained in the choir.

1925

Jan.11th: At the invitation of the Rector, the Mayor (Councillor E. Sewell) and Corporation attend in state the 10.30 Mass...afterwards partake of refreshments at the presbytery.

Feb 2nd: Blessing of throats after Mass.

April 19th: 1st meeting of the Bexhill Conference of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

1928

Nov 24th: A Jumble Sale was held in the school....Everything went off well. Result £16.3/3d (First one held in the parish?)

1931

Dec.3rd: A newly born male child was found in the porch abandoned by his parents. Police took the child to Battle Infirmary.

Dec.24th: The child was baptised Francis and taken to Nazareth House, Finchley.

1932

Sept 22nd: Land in the garden formerly rented was bought from the Southern Railway for £20.

1934

Dec.1st: Fr. Provincial arrives to consult about proposed Cooden church. (Land bought for £1100 in Jan.1935)

1939

Feb 15th: Sol. Requiem for Pope Pius XI. Children sang well.

March 2nd: News comes over our Radio at 5.10 p.m. announcing the election of Pius XII. At 5.30 we sing "God bless our Pope" - intimating thereby the great fact to the people.

June 1st: Contract signed for the new church at Little Common - £7114.0.0.

Sept 3rd: War began - Sunday 10.45 our time.

Dec 25th: No Midnight Mass this year.

1940

July 3rd: Change Banks from LLoyds to Midland.

July 21st: The School is partly evacuated to Letchworth.

In contrast to the period of the Great War, there are no references at all in the house diary to the events of 1939 -15. In fact the Diary is silent from July 1942 - Sept 1946.

1948

April 4th: Low Sunday. Mayor and Council attend Mass.

July 30th: After twelve months protracted negotiations and many disappointments a site has been chosen in Woodgate Pk for the new Primary School, also a site in the De La Warr Rd. for the Secondary School. Negotiations are also in hand for a site for a new Church in Sidley.

1950

May 21st: New statue of St. Mary Magdalene in Lourdes Chapel blessed. It is the work of Mrs Blakeman (£80).

Sept 3rd: Fr. Provincial agrees that we should buy a site at Sidley for a new Church.

1952

Jan 20th: Fr. Provincial preaches at High Mass in presence of Mayor and Civic Representatives. School fund temporarily closed at £9.400. Now we start accumulating for the new church at Sidley.

Feb 6th: H.M. The King dies.

10

Mar 28th: Transfer of land at Sidley completed by Mr. George Ravensheare.

1953

May 7th: Building starts at Sidley.

June 2nd: Coronation Mass 8 p.m. Crowded out. Choir sang "Haec Dies" etc!

June 13th - 14th: Diamond Jubilee Celebrations. Reception a great success. Dinner at Granville for 20 priests - total cost £52. Ceremonies organised by Fr. Holland. (Brilliant)

Oct 25th: Mr. E. Davey presents stained glass windows by E. J. Nuttgens - £300. They depict St. Augustine and St. Richard.

1954

May 11th: Opening of the new Church of Our Lady of the Rosary at Sidley. Church blessed and Mass offered by Mr. Cowderoy, Bishop of Southwark.

1955

July 16th: Centenary celebrations of Father Founder. High Mass in presence of the Mayor and 20 out of 27 members of the Council.

1956

May 6th: First Sun evening Mass at St. M.M. 8.00 p.m. - 85 came.

Oct. 6th: Eileen Crowley and Mary Regan arrive from Ireland to work in the Presbytery.

(Eileen married the head Altar Server and they became Mr. and Mrs. Paddy Pearson.)

Oct. 7th: Fr. J. Jukes, O.F.M. (Conv) opens Parish Mission - very well attended.

1959

Jan. 5th: St. Mary Magdalene's School re-opens as a Primary School.

Jan. 7th: St. Richard's Secondary School opened today with 178 children. Fr. Forde said the prayers and addressed the children and staff at the first assembly.

March 15th: Mission at Sidley Church. About 80 attended each evening.

May 31st: For the first time the Corpus Christi procession this year was accompanied by the Hooe Silver Band. Good attendance.

1961

April 2nd: Holy Week were done in full for the first time. Good Friday - people unable to get in the Church, many had to stay outside.

April 13th: The new School at Nazareth House opens today.

May 21st: One week's Mission at Little Common Church.

Dec. 21st: The first Ordination at St. Mary Magdalene's - Fr. J. Sullivan, a 75 year old ex-army captain.

1968

Nov. 14th: Holy Mass offered for the first time at 3, Southcliffe Avenue at the Sisters of Notre Dame.

1969

Jan 23rd: Fr. Edward O'Neill was appointed by the Home Office as chaplain to the new Northeye Prison, opened on the site of the former Wartling R.A.F. camp. The first Mass was said there on 23rd Feb.

1970

April 19th: Scouts St. George's Day parade - the first time it has been held here.

1972

July 9th: Concelebrated Mass in the grounds of the Manor House, Old Bexhill - at the top of upper Sea Road. (Where St. Richard is said to have lived for a time) This was to celebrate the 1200th anniversary of the Bexhill Charter granted by Offa, King of the Mercians, in A.D.772.

1982

The Holy Father, John Paul II paid a visit to these islands. He was greeted at Gatwick Airport by our Bishop Cormac and eventually came to Canterbury - to which town a considerable number of our parishioners went.

.....+.....

Parish Activities

Guild of St. Stephen

Each of our Churches is fortunate in having a small team of Altar Servers. As with so many of the volunteer workers in any parish community, there is a tendency to take them for granted. It is an immense privilege to assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Servers need constant support and encouragement from their parents and parish community.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (S.V.P)

Founded in 1833 by Frederic Ozanam to help those in need. The Society is represented in 114 countries worldwide. It is organised into groups called Conferences. Each member contributes as his or her time and resources permit, in an effort to bear witness to the love of Christ.

The work of the S.V.P. continues to be giving support both spiritual and financial to the needy, the sick and housebound, those in hospital, and those who are unemployed

The Bexhill Conference was started by Father Charles Cunningham prior to the last war. After a break for the war years, the Conference was restarted by Mr. J. Barry and has continued since then.

The Bexhill Conference has twelve members in 1993, with Father Peter Fenwick as Chaplain. It meets once a month for an hour for prayer, reports and arranging hospital visits. The present president is Mr. P. Smits.

Padre Pio Prayer Group

It was Pope John Paul II who summed up the specific character of this Movement: "the knowledge that the first, and indispensable, means for

the spreading of the Kingdom of God amongst souls is prayer, continuous, humble and devoted. The Christian must pray, always, without ever tiring, following the example of Jesus."

There are about twenty members in Bexhill who meet with their Spiritual Director once a month after attending Mass. The reading of Scripture and the Recitation of the Rosary, together with prayerful reflection on these form the basis of the gatherings. Members are drawn from the whole parish community, and many are actively involved in the work of the parish, including the U.C.M. Anne Whitington is the link person for this group.

The Union of Catholic Mothers (U.C.M)

The Union of Catholic Mothers was founded in 1913 to unite Catholic married women, whose aim is to follow the full Christian ideal of marriage and family life. The meetings combine prayer with a blend of social and spiritual activities.

It was Fr. Geoffrey Smith who encouraged the formation of the U.C.M in St. Mary Magdalene's, in 1947. For some years there were two branches- one at Sidley and one in Bexhill. These were later amalgamated and fortnightly meetings are now held - alternating between Bexhill and Sidley.

The current membership is over thirty members. The aim is to provide a varied programme of speakers and the occasional outing. The U.C.M are frequently asked to help provide refreshments for any social occasions in the Hall. For some years they have organised Lenten Lunches to raise money for CAFOD. This year £550 was raised. They also help with financial support for an African girl student. Frequent letters and

photographs are exchanged. New members are always welcome. The President this year is Mrs. Margaret Ferber.

The Catenians

The Catenian Association is a group of Catholic business and professional men who meet at least once a month, for the free exchange of views and to help and encourage one another and their families in both their social and business lives.

The Association was founded by Manchester business man John Shepherd in 1908. Its first title was "The Chums Benevolent Association". The name was changed in 1910 under J. O'Donnell. Bishop Casartelli was a patron. He was also a great friend of the Rosminians and a frequent visitor to the community at Bexhill.

The Bexhill Circle of the Catenian Association developed out of the Hastings Circle. On March 8th 1971. Fathers Downey, Eedy, Nann and Walsh attended the inaugural Dinner in the company of His Worship the Mayor.

Current membership stands at about fifty and this year's President is Mr. Bill Low.

A.P.F.

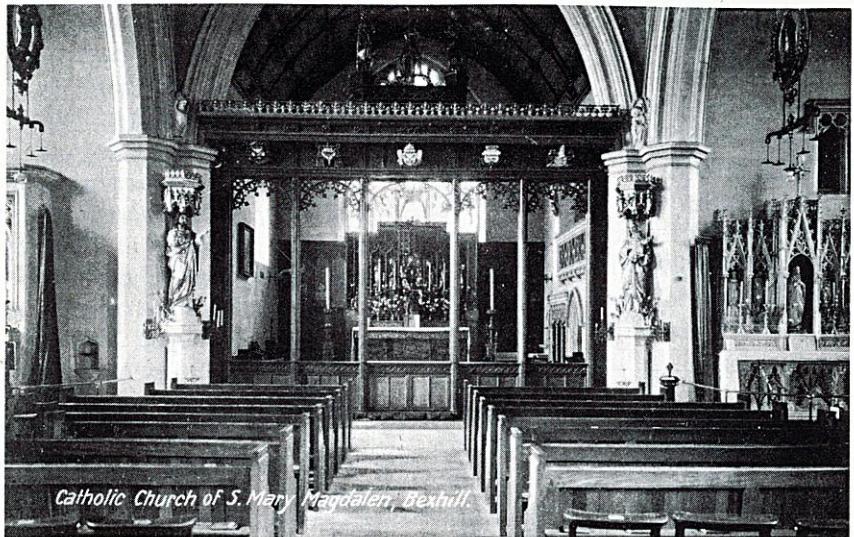
The Association for the Propagation of the Faith was founded in 1822 to assist in the spread of the Gospel by means of prayer and alms for the support of Missionaries.

The distinctive red collecting boxes are a familiar sight in every parish throughout the country. Bexhill is no exception. Parishioners are very generous, but we must always remember that the main work of the Association is to pray for the spread of the Good News.

Mrs. P. Over is the coordinator. (Continued on Page 20)

St. Mary Magdalene's Church, Bexhill 1907

Within ten years of its opening it became clear that the original Church was going to be too small to cater for the increase in the community. Proposals for a larger church were finalised in 1906, and the plans drawn up by Mr. Young, the architect of the original building. The builders were Messrs. A.T. Stains of London and the cost of the new church, £10,000, was met by the Institute of Charity.



The furnishings and internal layout of this lovely church have been subjected to considerable alteration over the years. Some of those parishioners who knew St. Mary Magdalene's prior to these changes have described them as "vandalism", others have welcomed them. Several of these changes were necessitated by the liturgical renewal which followed the second Vatican Council. This brief description of the present church is based on Father Pat Downey's article in the Parish Magazine of Autumn 1972.

Cruciform in shape and Gothic in style, the building was described at the time as "practically a copy of the church at Alfriston, but instead of the low spire the tower will be carried up an additional storey in order to provide a ringing chamber."

The walls are of Kentish rag from Maidstone and the dressings of Monk's Park bath stone. The windows and fittings contain gun-metal to withstand the sea air. The present west porch is a later addition.

Over the gable is a representation of the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God) shedding His Blood into a chalice and bearing the cross. Over the north-east porch is a figure of St. Mary Magdalene carrying the vase.

The exterior of the north transept is embellished with a representation of the pelican feeding its young with its own blood, symbolising the Blessed Sacrament and the Church caring for its young. It is also the crest of the Rosminians.

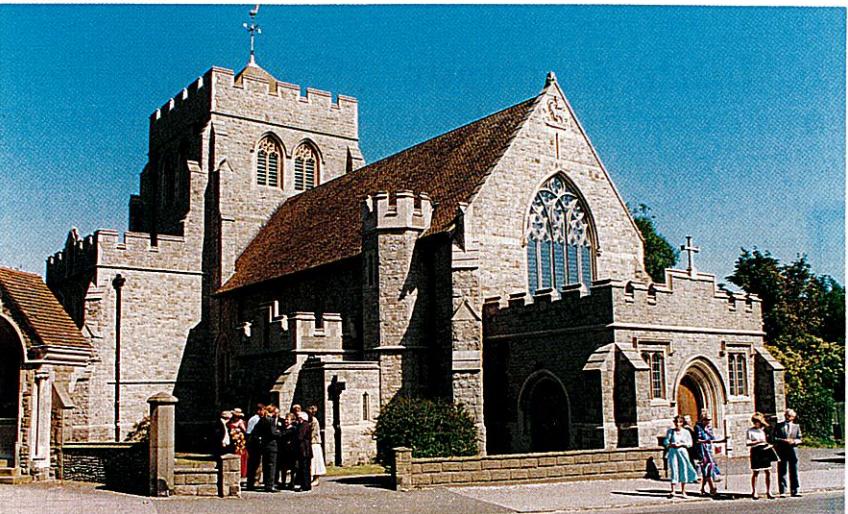
Entering the church through the west porch the eye is drawn immediately towards the sanctuary. The east window is rich in colour. The central figure is that of Our Lord as King of Kings. On his right kneels his mother Mary and on his left

Saint Mary Magdalene. To the right of them is St. Francis and to the left St. Elizabeth of Hungary.

The smaller frames contain representations of the Blessed Sacrament, monograms of the Holy Name, angels holding the motto 'caritas' and the emblems of the Passion. This, with the windows in the south transept depicting scenes from Lourdes, was donated by Miss E.A. Francis, and made by Mayer & Co. of London.

Below the east window is the magnificent carved oak reredos framed by a vine in high relief, and surmounted by an angel holding a monogram of the Holy Name. The four niches contain carved statues of four penitent saints; from right to left SS. Dismas (the good thief), Mary Magdalene, Peter and Thais of Alexandria. The centre niche contains the throne for the Blessed Sacrament and Crucifix, surrounded by a group of adoring angels. The carving is the work of Messrs. Robinson of London, and the statues are by Her Stuffessor of the Austrian Tyrol.

The stone credence table against the north wall contains a selection of inlaid marbles from the Catacombs in Rome. The Altar itself - moved forward from its original position below the reredos - is made from Sicilian marble with frontal and sides of Irish and Siberian marble. The opus textile in the front panel is again the crest of the Rosminians and is the work of Messrs. Whitehead of London.



On the south side of the sanctuary is a built-in Sedilia, above which is a tribune or singing loft. On the north wall of the sanctuary are two memorial windows: that of SS James and Patrick, in memory of James Patrick Cox, and that SS Cecilia and Joseph to Cecilia Mary Blunt. The floor of the sanctuary is of marble.

Originally, the north transept was the Lady Chapel with the Pieta carved by Mr. McCarthy. The south transept was originally dedicated to the Sussex Saints, Wilfred and Richard, a wood carving of whom is now in the north transept. Their altar has been replaced by a statue and altar in honour of our Lady of Lourdes.

The church has a fine Gothic barrel vaulted ceiling of pitched pine with carved bosses. The nave walls have niches on each side where it was hoped to erect statues of SS George, Andrew, Patrick and David on one side, and SS Wilfrid, Augustine, Richard and Gregory on the other, but six of these are still empty.

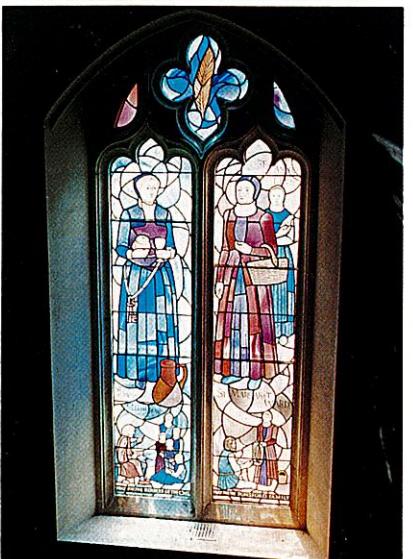
Symbolic carvings have been introduced into the bases of the arches. Under the tower are the four Evangelists, while two in the chancel represent the Eucharist: a fish and a basket of bread, and a raven bringing bread to Elias. On either side of the nave are two heads representing the old and new testaments; the synagogue blindfolded, and the church

crowned. The arches of the tribune contain symbols of faith, hope and charity.

More recent additions to the church include the statue of St. Mary Magdalene in the south transept, a gift of the Children of Mary Sodality, and the work of Mrs. Blackman, erected in 1950. The stained glass window to SS Augustine and Richard is in memory of Fr. C. Stapley, a former parishioner (1953).



The window opposite depicts Martha and Mary with Jesus and is in memory of Veron Woodward. Members of the C.W.L. donated the window of St. Margaret Clitherow and members of the Ponsford family paid for the the window of St. Margaret Ward.



The fine, life-sized, carved wood Crucifix was hung in the arch of the sanctuary in 1972. This crucifix, the work of Job Pendle was removed from the Rosminian Novitiate at Wadhurst before the house was closed in 1970. It had dominated the cloister there for almost a century.



St. Martha's Church, Little Common 1939

Father Edmund Hobson served on the Bexhill Mission from 1928 - 1946. He was the driving force behind the decision to build a church in the village of Little Common. He envisaged a building which would accommodate two hundred people. His prudent foresight has been amply justified in view of the increase in population in recent years.



On August 11th, 1939, the foundation stone of the new church was laid by the Right Reverend William Brown, Bishop of Pella, an auxiliary bishop to the Bishop of Southwark. In a sealed envelope behind the stone were placed current copies of The Times, the Universe, the Bexhill Observer, and several 1939 coins, together with a parchment recording the occasion.

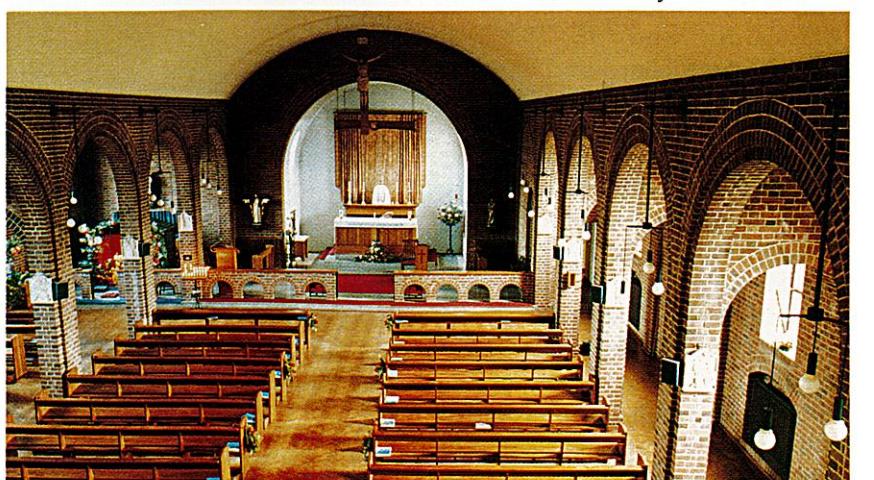
The Architect was Mr. Marshall Wood, of Hooe and the contractors were the Bexhill firm of E. Godwin and Sons. The cost of this building was £7,114.0.0. Substantial financial help was given by a member of the Sainsbury family.

With the outbreak of war in September of 1939, and the resulting mobilisation of all available personnel to build coastal defences, special permission had to be obtained from the Ministry of Works in order to complete the building.

Built entirely of brick, the church is plain on the outside and unadorned within. It relies on its

own architectural lines - including the nave windows which continue through the line of the eaves, the use of rounded arches and of four different varieties of brick - to create its own special visual impact of calm, uncluttered space. The architect has created a building which blends well into the Sussex countryside. It has a quiet, homely atmosphere which endears itself to regular users.

Completed in 1940, the church opening was a quiet affair. It was to be 1942 before it was used as a regular Mass centre on Sundays.



Mrs. Paul Sainsbury was the first Sacristan.

During the war many of the local congregation had been evacuated following the fall of France and the Sunday Mass was augmented by troops who had been billeted in the area.

The consecration of St. Martha's took place in January 1971 - by The Bishop of the recently established diocese of Arundel and Brighton, Bishop David Cashman. By this time the earlier altar (containing relics of Pope St. Clement, and St. Cecilia) had been re-positioned to allow Mass to be celebrated with the priest facing the people.

Several parishioners contributed towards the furnishing of the church. These include Mrs. Durham who gave the crucifix and the painting of Our Lady in the Lady Chapel. The statue of Our Lady was given by Mrs. Dorothy Bird in 1949 in memory of her husband. The Stations of the Cross which show more than a passing resemblance to the work of Eric Gill, were made by Catholic artists in Crawley.

In 1986 Fr. Keith Tomlinson bought a two manual pipe organ from the Methodist church in Wadhurst and installed it in the choir gallery. Wadhurst was the home of the Novitiate House of the Rosminian Order from 1880 to 1970. The opening recital was given by Mr. Paul Inwood, music advisor to the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton.

1992 saw the fulfilment of a long awaited ambition when a church hall was opened behind St. Martha's church. Various building plans had been considered over the years, but, thanks to a generous loan of £40,000 from the Rosminian Order, the dream has finally been realised. The hall which cost £93,000, was designed by Mr. Kenneth Higgs and built by the Bexhill firm of A.J. Hammond. It is similar in size to an original scheme proposed in 1947, when Fr. Maurice Stokes was parish priest.

The official opening and blessing was conducted by Fr. Dennis Hare, I.C., Rosminian Provincial Superior. The Rev. Cynthia Park from Little Common Methodist Church and Envoy Naomi Bennett from the Salvation Army Citadel joined in the celebration.

The external name plaque is the work of another Rosminian - Father Gervase Duffy.



The building will accommodate one hundred and fifty people and already, within nine months of opening, it has been booked by

several local interest groups and societies as well as being in regular use by parishioners for coffee after Sunday Mass, for fund raising events, family parties and the like. It will shortly be used also for the Children's Liturgy of the Word on Sundays. Adult Catechesis meetings are also planned with the new hall for their venue.

Each area of the parish has its own identity. Some parishioners happily attend Mass in any of the four churches in the town. Others, limited by age or lack of transport, or simply by affection for their "own" church, stay close to home.

Many regular parishioners at St. Martha's, both men and women, work together in teams to clean, dust and polish the church. Others arrange flowers, help with the collections, or distribute Bulletins and newspapers. Others are involved as Eucharistic Ministers, Altar Servers, Readers, Organist and Choir members and Sacristans.

This is part of any church community organisation. But perhaps there is something special about those attending this church - let us hope that they are inspired by their Patron, St. Martha.

Memories

Various parishioners have kindly mentioned a few of their memories of the clergy over the years. Some of these may jog your own memories.

Father Hobson was quite a keen sportsman - playing both golf and tennis. He also used to ice skate on the lake at Egerton Park in the winter. Fifty years ago all the parish visiting was done on foot. When funds permitted, a bicycle, motor bike and eventually a car was used.

Father Geoffrey Smith built a small aviary against the back wall of the church, below the sacristy, where he bred budgerigars and sold them to boost parish funds.

Other priests were known to be quite skilled in studying racing form and were not averse to an occasional small speculative venture from time to time.

Brother Delaney was popular with the school children. His bedroom overlooked the playground, and the children would gather below his window in expectation of a shower of sweets descending upon them. Brother Baxter was an expert book binder and there are still examples of his repair work being used in the parish today.

Father Jim Kelleher was known to be an enthusiastic supporter of Mussolini and had a framed picture of the Duce in his room. This used to be turned round - face to wall - by one of the parishioners whenever he was in the presbytery.

When Father Walker died his open coffin was left in the parlour the day before his funeral, for those who wished to pay their last respects.

Most parishioners are only too well aware of the human frailties of their clergy! Their tolerance and loyalty is a tribute to their faith.

Our Lady of the Rosary Church, Sidley 1954

Following the rapid expansion of housing in the Sidley area after the Second World War, it became clear that a further church was needed to serve the Catholics of the area. Father Geoffrey Smith, who served on the Bexhill Mission from 1947 - 1955, drew up plans for a future church which could become a hall when funds became available for a more substantial church.



The generosity of George Ravenshear provided the site for the new church, and the architect Mr. Alec Watson realised Fr. Smith's architectural scheme. In 1954 the new church was blessed by the Bishop of Southwark.

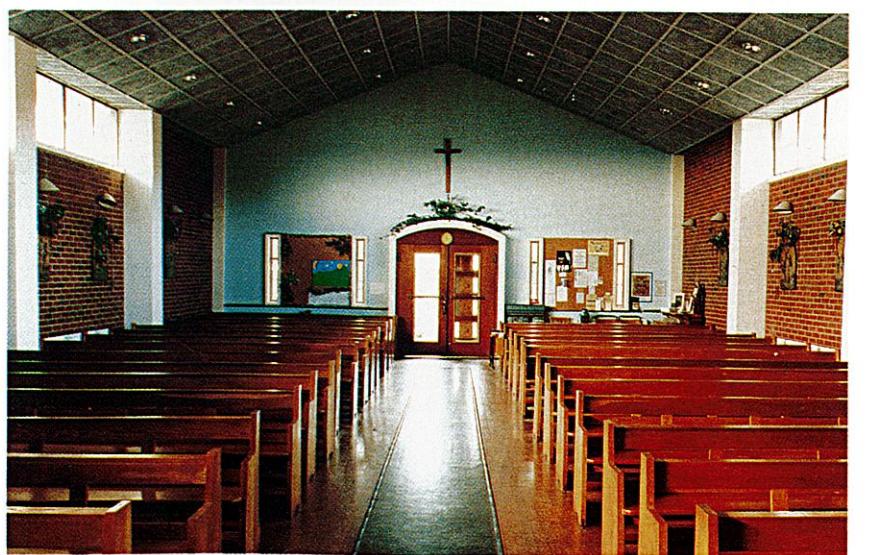
The church occupies a commanding position at the junction of Southlands Road with Ninfield Road, with a fine view over the valley towards Crowhurst. Like St. Martha's, it is built entirely of brick - but there the similarity ends. This is essentially a functional building, but its steep pitched roof and deep portico give it a distinctive character which is rarely found in buildings of this period. The warm brick interior and comparatively low ceiling height, together with the pale hardwood floor and benches, create an atmosphere which is devotional without being too formal.

Seventeen years later, in 1971, a church hall was opened on the feast of our Lady of the Rosary. This was paid for by the fund raising efforts of the local parishioners, supported and

encouraged by the indefatigable Father Patrick Downey.

The hall accommodates church events and contributes, through hirings, to church funds. It also contributes to domestic life in Sidley as it is used four days a week for an independent play - school and mother - and - toddlers group.

The Catholic congregation of Sidley is distinguished by a strong sense of community, based on family life, in which children play a large part.



At an anticipated Midnight Mass - celebrated at 7.00 p.m. last Christmas, ninety-six children formed up to receive the traditional small gift of sweets after the final blessing.

Not so many attend regularly, but from thirty to fifty children are cared for most Sundays by a devoted group of ladies who conduct the "children's liturgy", assisted by three or four older girls and boys. After the entrance hymn, the children are taken into the hall for their own Liturgy of the Word, returning to join the Offertory Procession and to bring texts or pictures they have drawn or coloured to the priest at the altar. They then join their parents or guardians for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

After Mass, refreshments are served in the hall, news and views are exchanged and activities arranged in informal discussions.

On a more formal basis, an elected Church Committee meets regularly to plan and direct congregational affairs and a small sub-committee discusses liturgical matters with the priest.

The importance of music in worship is well understood, and both traditional and "folk" styles are used. Musical and social harmony is preserved by means of close cooperation between all those involved. The result is a happy blend of adults and younger singers and instrumentalists.

Their hard work in preparing each Sunday's Liturgy is clearly appreciated by the congregation. Great care is also taken in the organisation of Servers, Special Ministers of the Eucharist, Readers and Collectors.

Visitors often remark on the happy atmosphere - the parishioners don't, after all they create it.

Jesus the Carpenter

Christ Jesus was a carpenter
and fashioned things of wood.
Long, peaceful years in Nazareth
beside His bench He stood.

With mallet, chisel, plane and saw
He shaped with loving care
the simple things of daily life -
a yoke, a tub, a share.

Those hands that spread the heavens wide
and drew Man out of clay
made tops and beads and building blocks
for little ones at play.

The workshop door was never shut,
the children came at will
to listen to the tales He told
and marvel at his skill.

One day they found their friend was gone;
His tools hung in the rack,
the air was chill and in the west
the sky was brooding black.

One shaft of blood - red sunlight seemed
to mock them in their loss
and cast upon the inner wall
the shadow of a cross.

When at the last He hung upon
that stark and bitter tree
did He recall the children's smiles
in far-off Galilee?

For, once, the cold and fearful men
who gave Him up to pain
had been as innocent as those
who sought Him now in vain.

Christian Unity

"Churches together in England" was the new title adopted by the Ecumenical movement in 1991, but Bexhill churches decided to retain their association under the old name of "Bexhill Council of Churches".

The programme of joint activities begins in January with the week of prayer for Christian Unity and continues through Lent with the weekly Lent Lectures. In July and August we have outdoor community hymn singing and, in the lead up to Christmas, carols on the Town Hall Square.

The Council holds four public meetings every year to discuss local Christian activities. There is an elected Executive Council on which all the churches, the Salvation Army, the Quakers and other groups are represented.

In 1990 Fr. Peter Fenwick was elected Vice - Chairman of the Council and in 1991 became Chairman. He was then elected to the Executive Committee together with Mrs. Margaret Ferber who was later replaced by Mrs. Joy Dowde.

The Joint Church Service during Christian Unity Week in 1992 was conducted at St. Mary Magdalene's by Fr. Peter Reynolds. The guest speaker was Fr. Emmanuel Sullivan of the Friars of the Atonement, the American Congregation attached to Westminster Cathedral.

Our parish is invited every year to provide a priest to give one of the Lent Lectures and to introduce the hymns on one of the Sundays of community hymn singing.

Personal contacts with the clergy of other churches are cultivated by our priests and opportunities to celebrate together are taken whenever this can be done without compromising our Catholic beliefs. When All Saints Anglican church in Sidley was seriously damaged by fire, the Anglican Bishop of Lewes was very happy to be allowed to use Our Lady of the Rosary Church for a Confirmation Service and the Vicar of All Saints and his congregation join the priest and people of Our Lady of the Rosary for a joint service on Good Friday every year.

Of course there is still a very long way to go towards total unity anywhere in the world but at least we may rightly feel that in Bexhill we have overcome a great deal of prejudice on all sides, including our own, and are moving towards a greater sense of Christian fellowship as St. Paul defined it: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all, and through all and in all" (Eph.4.5)

St. Mary Magdalene's R.C. Primary School

In 1898 the Rosminian Sisters of Providence had opened the first Catholic School in Bexhill since the Reformation. At the same time it had already become clear that the first Church, only five years old, would soon be too small for the growing numbers of the Catholic community in Bexhill. Discussions began in earnest, and by June, 1898 when the Bishop of Southwark visited the Bexhill Mission, he approved the plans which had been drawn up for a new and much larger church.

On January 13th 1908 the first Mass was said in the crypt of the new Church. On the same day the Rosminian Sisters transferred the school from their temporary quarters in the choir gallery to the old church (now St. Mary Magdalene's Hall). The school, now renamed St. Mary Magdalene's, was able to reopen in very much improved surroundings.

Two years later, on September 10th, 1910, the Parish House Diary recorded that "Our school has been approved by the Board of Education." On Sept. 12th, the diary continues.. "School reopened under new system. Miss Mary Holtham Headmistress..." The entry for Sept. 16th reads: "Received notification that the Local Council had recognised school." There were fifty children on the books. The age range was 5 - 14 and included non-Catholic as well as Catholic children.

Entries in the School Diaries in these early years show the same concern over curriculum and method that we know today. But they were less hurried times. The school would close on Holydays of Obligation, and children would be absent during the fruit-picking season. They were also less affluent and less healthy times. Sickness and bad weather often kept children away from school, and whenever the erratic heating system broke down the school would close.

In 1936 the school was extended in order to cope with 120 children. The situation

became more difficult at the beginning of the war when children from a school in Blackheath were evacuated to Bexhill. The Vicar of St. Barnabas helped to organise alternate sessions for the two groups of children. Then in July of 1940 when invasion was thought to be imminent, the school was closed and evacuated to St. Francis Elementary School in Letchworth. It reopened at the beginning of 1942.

On April 13th 1961, St. Mary Magdalene's School was able to move into the east wing of Nazareth House, thanks to the kindness and support of the Nazareth House Community. The Earl of Longford formally opened the new school and since then numbers have risen steadily to more than 320.

On September 2nd 1992 Mrs. Georgina Dowson became the new Head Teacher. The formal induction took place on September 13th, during Mass at St. Mary Magdalene's celebrated by Father Peter Reynolds, and in the presence of Mr. John F. Ryan, Diocesan Director of Schools, and a large group of children with their parents. Mrs. Dowson now brings us up to date.....

The school has continued to grow and develop. Two new classrooms have been added to make adequate provision for the increasing numbers of children.

We have strong links with the local community, and in addition to our connection with St. Richard's and Bexhill High School, we also enjoy welcoming



the many other visitors who come to help us. Especially valued is the time and the love shown by parents and other parishioners. We are very fortunate to have the liturgical and musical input from the parish which enhances the work of the staff at school.

Both Father Peter Fenwick, M.B.E, our much loved Chaplain, and Fr. Peter Reynolds who is Chair of Governors give generously of their time, and their presence in our school community is a constant reminder of the high esteem in which our Catholic Schools are held by the priests of the parish.

The added bonus of being able to use the beautiful Chapel of Nazareth House - thanks to the generosity of Sister Thomas - enables our school family to celebrate together more often than would otherwise be possible. We look forward to the future with our children truly living up to the school motto of being: "Happy, holy, and hard working".

St. Richard's R.C. School, Bexhill

St. Richard's Comprehensive School serves the deaneries of Hastings and Eastbourne. The life of St. Richard, marked by a loving concern for others and an enthusiasm for learning, is an inspiration to our boys and girls. Tony Campbell, Headteacher since 1988, gives this brief outline of the last 35 years.

Construction of the new school began in January 1957 and was completed two years later. The doors opened in January 1959 for an intake of 190 pupils, drawn from Bexhill, Hastings, St. Leonards, Hailsham and Eastbourne.

In spite of its small size, teaching at St. Richard's could be difficult. The task facing the new school Headteacher, Mr. F.C. Smith, and his staff, was to set about building up a school spirit and a sense of corporate identity. This was no mean task; as many of the older pupils - drawn from other schools - inevitably felt a sense of dislocation and some disaffection.

1959 was a momentous year at St. Richard's. On June 29th the Right Revd. Cyril Cowderoy, Bishop of Southwark performed the official blessing of the school and celebrated Mass. On September 26th, the Right Hon. Lord Pakenham, P.C., performed the Official Opening Ceremony. Then, on December 2nd, St. Richard's held its first Speech Day, presided over by the Rev Father P.G. Forde, parish priest at St. Mary Magdalene's.

The school made good progress, but Mr. Smith's health deteriorated, and he was obliged to leave in 1961. In the interim - before the appointment of Mr. L. Garnet Thomas in September 1961, the deputy, Mr. Pat Burke, became acting - Head. Mr. Thomas was a man of quiet, scholarly disposition, and he presided over a period of steady growth for the school community.

On November 24th 1975, the County Education Committee

approved plans for the reorganisation of the secondary schools in Bexhill. September 1977 was agreed as the most suitable date on which to inaugurate these changes. Mr. Thomas left the school at Christmas 1976. Miss Morgan was acting-Head until the appointment, in April 1977, of Mr. Brian Keaveny.

St. Richard's became comprehensive in September 1977 with a school roll of 350 pupils. Mr. Brian Keaveny was to prove to be the ideal man for these new challenges.

In 1977 the PTA was inaugurated. This continues to be a most successful and hard-working group, who have raised many thousands of pounds for the school and have been a great source of support and strength to the governing body and the staff. They deserve all our thanks.

From 1977 to September 1981 school numbers had increased to 600, necessitating an extensive building programme. In 1980 another storey was added to 'B' block which incorporated four classrooms and a new library. In 1981 'C' block and the gymnasium were added. Meanwhile structural problems in both 'A' block and the dining hall had to be rectified. The school buildings were now surrounded by so much scaffolding that the local newspaper headlined its report: "St. Richard's on the Scaffold".

When Mr. Keaveny left, at Christmas 1982, the school had become a well established and respected catholic comprehensive.



Mr. Sean O'Keefe was Headteacher from January 1983 to August 1988. This was to be a period of consolidation during which the academic standards improved steadily.

Mr. Tony Campbell was appointed Headteacher in 1988. The school continues to make progress in many areas of achievement, both academic and pastoral. School numbers have now increased to 680 children.

During this period the School Governors reluctantly refused entry to a large number of pupils, leading to a planned development costing about £1.3 million. This will include the upgrading of existing facilities, and the major work of building another block to house Technology/Resources and Offices. The academic attainments of St. Richard's have been maintained and the school has been placed, each year, in the top ten schools in East Sussex.

May the progress made since 1959 long continue, and may the community of parents, pupils, staff and priests hold fast to the ideals of St. Richard: "To know God more clearly, love Him, more dearly and follow Him more nearly".

Parish Activities

Continued from P.11.....

The Parish Council

The Canon Law of the Church requires that each diocese establishes a pastoral council "to study and weigh those matters which concern the pastoral works of the diocese, and to propose practical conclusions concerning them...The pastoral council has only a consultative vote."

At local level each parish priest is required to establish similar consultative bodies. The first attempt to form a Parish Council in Bexhill was in March 1969. Since then there has been a number of other attempts which have met with varying degrees of success. Like marriage, we may not know the secret of success, but we are still working at it!

Preparation for the Sacraments

Many Catholic parents who were prepared at school for their first Confession, Communion and Confirmation have been disturbed to learn that this important work is now to be carried out within the parish community.

In effect this means that trained Catechists teach our young people outside of the classroom situation. The Church has always taught that the prime responsibility for leading children in the ways of Faith, lies with the parents. Parents should help their young ones on their faith journey. They are invited to attend meetings as well as their children. This worries some people. It shouldn't. But it may mean that those parents whose faith commitment is lukewarm, need to make some radical decisions. Here again there is a shortage of helpers.

People feel inadequate -they "don't know enough". But there is plenty of help in the diocese. Ask about it - you will be surprised!

Junior S.V.P.

Brian Keaveny outlines the aims and work of this recently formed group.

The Junior S.V.P was formed in June 1993 following a very successful confirmation programme. The Catechists who prepared the young parishioners for their Confirmation were particularly keen that the Spirit received in the Sacrament be given an opportunity to develop and grow.

8 young parishioners have taken up the challenge and meet monthly in order to support each other in acts of service.

Some older parishioners have warmly received their visits and recently really enjoyed a Bingo/Coffee afternoon which was organised and run by the Junior S.V.P. These young members also helped with the Summer Fair this year, and this too was much appreciated by everyone involved.

In September there is a visit organised to the diocesan Youth Gather, and nearer to Christmas the members will hold another Bingo session (with mince pies!).

We hope to continue our meetings and next Summer the intention is for a delegation from the Conference to attend the "Camp Vincent".

Youth Club

Nina Over is the co-ordinator of this very successful club which caters for 11 - 16 year old boys and girls from the parish.

The Youth Club meets on Friday evenings at St. Richard's during the school terms. Membership is limited to 60 at the moment, and there is a waiting list of twenty.

The weekly meetings are carefully planned. There are simple rules to be observed and members pay 20p when they check in. In addition to a variety of games which the young people may want to play there is a varied programme of events e.g. swimming, barbecue, disco, karaoke and social/games evenings with the young people from St. Leanoards and Hastings parish youth groups. As always, the greatest need at the moment is for more young parents to give some time to help run this wonderful scheme for our young people. It really is up to the parents to show that they care about how their children spend their leisure time.

Saturday A.M.Club

This is another club which caters for our younger children. It meets from 11.30 - 1.30 on Saturday mornings at St. Richard's. In addition to organised games, there is also a variety of other activities involving craft work, collage etc.

Both of these youth groups are still in their infancy, but they can only succeed with the good will and involvement of parents and organisers. There are short courses available in the Diocese for those who may like to get involved but who may be anxious that they lack expertise.

We are very fortunate to have the full cooperation and support of Tony Campbell, Headteacher at St. Richard's, who is happy to make available the excellent facilities at St. Richard's for our young people. The rest is up to us!

The Wednesday Club

This parish group aims to give the opportunity, especially for new parishioners, to meet and make new friends and contacts in the parish. Twenty or more people enjoy the weekly gatherings for tea, maybe a few games and the occasional outing. It's all good clean fun!

The Congregation of the Poor Sisters of Nazareth

Early History

Bexhill Foundation

In 1890 the Sisters opened a small house in Hastings, at 119 High Street, opposite the Catholic church, and immediately began their work of caring for orphaned children.

In 1892 a site was purchased at Bexhill - three quarters of an acre for £1,000. In 1894 after much hardship, they were able to open the first section of the splendid House in Bexhill. According to a description at the time, it was built:

"as a permanent home for aged and infirm of both sexes, also for incurable and orphaned girls, those entirely idiotic or suffering from fits excepted."

Further extensions were added, in 1910, 1926 and 1937 - by which time the Nazareth House Sisters were running a school for 130 of their resident children.

During their time in Bexhill, the Nazareth Houses Sisters have

cared for well over three thousand children and two thousand elderly people. This is a magnificent service to the local community and a powerful witness to the charism and mission of Mother Saint Basil.

Their work continues today, albeit with reduced numbers of religious community but, happily, with a devoted lay staff. Their link with the school continues as one of the community is on the staff of St. Mary Magdalene's school, part of which is housed in the earlier Nazareth House school.

The Congregation has 58 houses world wide, with 34 of these situated in the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic.

Rosminian Sisters

Early History

The Religious Congregation which bears the name 'Sisters of Providence, Rosminians' originated in northern Italy in the last century. In 1833, Antonio Rosmini, founder of the Institute of Charity was given permission to send members of his order to England and in that same year he assumed government of the Sisters to whom he gave suitable rules and training in accordance with the spirit of his Institute. The purpose of the Congregation according to the mind of its founder is to serve the Church by personal holiness and by works of charity following the indications of Divine Providence.

The sisters flourished in Italy, and in 1843 joined their Rosminian brothers in England. Their first foundation was at Loughborough, which is still the Provincial Mother House to this day.

Other houses soon followed in Rugby, Cardiff, London and elsewhere. Their main work was, and continues to be in the field of education.

Rosminian Sisters in Bexhill

In 1897 the Bishop of Southwark welcomed the Sisters to the Diocese. The Rosminian priests and brothers were also delighted to have their religious sisters working with them on the Bexhill Mission. The parish priest of Bexhill at this time was Father Richard Richardson.

The first Convent in Bexhill "Templemore" was situated in Cranfield Road. It was to house a small school which eventually took in boarding pupils who needed the sea air for health reasons. The sisters were given a warm welcome by the parishioners, especially a Mrs. Anstruther, Lady de Trafford and

the Benedictine nuns from Atherstone. The Nazareth House Sisters also called to welcome them and brought them a brace of rabbits!

When the Bishop came to visit the school, he wrote in his report:

"Their work is a small school and acts of charity among the people of the mission."

In addition to their work in the school, the Sisters were also very busy in the parish, running various evening classes, The Children of Mary, the Needlework Guild, and preparing children for their first Holy Communion.

Difficult Times

In September 1902 the school moved from the Convent in Cranfield Road to new premises first to 106 and six months later to 125 Windsor Road. Three years later they were again on the move - this time to a flat in Wickham Avenue, but after only six months they were ordered to move out. They managed to find two rooms over Mr. Deeprose's fruit shop in Sackville Road. In 1907 the school even had to try to function for six months in the organ gallery of the present St. Mary Magdalene's church. When the new church was finally opened in 1907, the school, now renamed St. Mary Magdalene's, moved into the present parish hall - which had been the original church.

In June 1908 history was made with the first Corpus Christi Procession to be held in Bexhill since the Reformation.

(This devotion in honour of Our Lord's presence in the Blessed Sacrament was re-introduced to this country by one of the early Rosminian priests - Father Luigi Gentili.)

The procession included children from both St. Mary Magdalene's and Nazareth House schools. The church was crowded and the pavements packed with spectators.

In 1918 the Sisters moved from their boarding Convent School ("Templemore") in Cranfield Road to a newly built Convent and Boarding School in Buckhurst Road. Sadly, after only fourteen years in their new premises the Sisters left Bexhill and the school was closed in 1932.

Return to Bexhill

Fifty years later, in August 1983, the Rosminian Sisters of Providence, at the invitation of Fr. John Whelton and with the permission of Bishop Cormac Murphy O'Connor, returned to Bexhill to do pastoral work and to help in the parish as requested by the clergy.

The early work and dedication of the Sisters laid the foundations for the Catholic schools in Bexhill. We all owe them a debt of gratitude.

The Society of the Sacred Heart

Early History

The Society of the Sacred Heart was founded by Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat in Paris in 1800. In the following year the small group of dedicated women moved to Amiens, where a boarding school for girls was given into their care, and the next year a free school was opened.

These schools flourished and more postulants joined the Society. In 1805 a foundation was made at Grenoble, where an old Visitation Convent had been recovered from the wreckage of the Revolution by Philippine Duchesne, and from there the new Society spread throughout France. In 1818 Mother Duchesne (now Saint Philippine) took the Society to America where she

had been invited to Louisiana. After much poverty and many difficulties, convents were founded there, to spread the knowledge and love of the Sacred Heart.

In 1842 an opportunity opened for the nuns to come to England, to Berrymead in Acton, to educate girls and to discover and make known the love of God, which is revealed in human form in the person of Christ. Their vision was of enabling young people to participate in the mission of spreading the love of God and of building the Body of Christ by working for the growth and dignity of all human beings, which is essentially the work of Education.

The nuns lived an enclosed life with the boarding schools and day schools for children whose parents could not afford the fees. They also opened Training Colleges for teachers.

In 1965 the Vatican Council Fathers decreed that nuns should update themselves and cease to be enclosed. The Society of the Sacred Heart then became an Apostolic Institute, modifying their way of life, as the trend of the times led them out of their large institutes to live in smaller groups.

Bexhill Foundation

In 1985 a suitable place was found in Bexhill, and eight retired Sisters began a new form of community life, based on traditional ways of keeping up their prayer life - with fixed times for the Prayer of the Church, and a reasonably ordered life as a community. Here in Bexhill they were very fortunate in the kind welcome given by the priests and people of the parish. Openings were found to help - in the Sacristy and in the instruction of children and adults, visiting the housebound, and in small ways to live their lives according to the Constitutions of the Society of the Sacred Heart.

Parish Information

St. Mary Magdalene's: Upper Sea Road, Bexhill - on - Sea, East Sussex. TN40 1RH
Tel. (0424) 210263

Other Churches: St. Martha's Little Common and Our Lady of the Rosary, Sidley.

Convents:

Poor Sisters of Nazareth, Nazareth House, Wrestwood Road, Bexhill - on - Sea, East Sussex TN40 2ND Tel. 219315

Sisters of Providence (Rosminian)
8 Rotherfield Avenue, Bexhill - on - Sea, East Sussex TN40 1SY tel. 214818

Sisters of the Sacred Heart, 10 Magdalen Road, Bexhill - on - Sea, East Sussex TN40 1SB Tel. 212869

Schools

St. Mary Magdalene's Aided Primary, Tel. 212907

St. Richard's Aided Secondary, Ashdown Road, Bexhill - on - Sea, East Sussex TN40 1SE Tel. 731070

Fountains Centre
c/o 'Osmunda' Tel. 730536

Bexhill Holiday Home

'Osmunda', 7 Cranfield Road, Bexhill - on - Sea, East Sussex TN40 1QB
Tel. (0424) 222307 or 081-668 2181 (bookings). Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities (Mental Handicaps)

Hospitals

Bexhill Hospital Tel. 212121
Conquest Hospital Tel. 755255

Information on the Covenant and Gift Aid Schemes

The benefits of increasing parish income by making a **Covenant** are so great (adding 33p to each £1 given) and yet the method is so simple that it should be our aim to encourage every tax paying parishioner to enter into a **Covenant**.

Alternatively, any tax paying parishioner who wishes to make a lump sum donation can do so, in the form of a **Deposited Covenant**.

This gift is made in the form of an interest free loan which the parish agrees to repay by four equal annual instalments; at the same time the donor makes a **Covenant** in favour of the parish for a lump sum equal to the amount of the annual repayment of the loan.

Gift Aid: Gift Aid is a form of tax relief on single gifts of £250 and upwards. A **Gift Aid Claim Form** is completed by the donor and the tax is reclaimed in a single instalment.

Your Parish Covenant Organiser will be pleased to hear from any parishioner who wishes to contribute under these schemes.

Acknowledgements

Father Patrick Downey's careful research while he was stationed here at St. Mary Magdalene's Parish resulted in several informative articles on the early history of the Mission here at Bexhill. His various articles in the church magazines have been used by the Bexhill Observer on several occasions, and have formed the basis of much of what is contained in this commemorative booklet.

Thanks also to Fathers Ray Wilcox and Peter Fenwick for reading most of the text and making helpful suggestions, and to Jim Fisher for his supportive interest and ideas.

Pictures: Studio John Photography, 51 Devonshire Road, Bexhill. Tel.211161,
also Peter Fairhurst and Peter Smits.

Printer: Barnes Watson Press, 20 Windsor Road, Bexhill. Tel.219496