Northern Catholic History

No. 28 Autumn, 1988

North East Catholic History Society

NORTH EAST CATHOLIC HISTORY SOCIETY

The Society was founded in July 1974 to foster interest and promote research into the history of the Catholic Church in North East England.

A yearly programme of talks and visits to places of Catholic interest is arranged and *NORTHERN CATHOLIC HISTORY*, the Society's periodical, is published twice yearly.

PATRONS: The Rt Rev. Hugh Lindsay, Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle, and the Rt Rev. Owen Swindlehurst, Auxiliary Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle.

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CONTENTS

Editorial Notes		2
The Heroines of Persecution Days	W. FEE	3
Charles Larkin, Radical Reformer, 1800–1879	T.P. MACDERMOTT	13
Pugin and St Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle upon Tyne	P. McGUINNESS	18
St Mary's, Whittingham, in 1934		33
Rev. W.J. Nicholson, 1917–1988		35
Programme 1988–1989		End cover

Illustrations:

Charles Larkin, 1800–1879	17
Augustus Welby Pugin, 1811–1852	19
St Mary's Church, Newcastle upon Tyne 1844	31
St Mary's, Whittingham, 1934	34
Rev. W.J. Nicholson	36

NORTH EAST CATHOLIC HISTORY SOCIETY

All members were saddened by the sudden death on 4 March of Fr Nicholson, our Chairman. Only a few days before, on 23 February, he had presided over the meeting at which Dr Elizabeth Redgate gave an excellent talk on St Cuthbert, a favourite subject of his. Indeed, Fr Nicholson had been the guiding light in the commemoration last year of the thirteenth centenary of the death of the Diocese's patron saint and, as well as concelebrating Mass in Lindisfarne Priory on the diocesan pilgrimage on 6 June, he had led the Society's own pilgrimage on 9 August to Inner Farne, where he fulfilled a long desired ambition of saying Mass in St Cuthbert's chapel. A brief obituary notice appears elsewhere in this issue but, as a founder-member and chairman of the Society from its start in 1974, since when he hardly ever failed to attend a lecture, outing or committee meeting, he will be sorely missed. After prayer, the best way we can perhaps repay him for his work for the Society is to support its activities and promote its objectives.

Dr Judith Champ's talk on 22 March on Bishop Ullathorne and the foundation of Oscott College was also well attended, and completed another successful lecture season. The Summer outings, on 21 May, to York, where members visited the new Bar Convent Museum, and on 18 June to Naworth Castle, were both blessed with fine weather, and their success was, once again, largely due to careful planning by Miss Molly Davison, our outings secretary, who, among her other talents, seems to enjoy foreknowledge of fine days ahead. Details of the 1988–89 lecture programme, again arranged by Miss Josephine O'Callaghan with her customary thoroughness, appear on the inside end cover, and the lectures promise to satisfy many interests.

In the present edition, Fr William Fee, who wrote in the Spring issue about the martyrs of the Diocese who were beatified last year, now identifies some of the host of heroic women who succoured the martyrs and who themselves suffered and died for the faith. The emergence of the Catholic community from the shadows of those penal days and their growing confidence in the nineteenth century is reflected in the remaining two articles: the first by T.P. Macdermott on Charles Larkin, a radical reformer and Catholic controversialist active in Newcastle, and the second by Peter McGuinness, our treasurer, on Augustus Welby Pugin, architect of St Mary's Cathedral, based upon letters which have recently cone to light. The extract from Peter Anson's *The Caravan Pilgrim* recording his visit to St Mary's, Whittingham, fifty years ago, is included as a further reminder of Fr Nicholson, who served that parish for so many years.

Articles for future editions are again earnestly sought.

Robin Gard, *Hon. Editor*

THE HEROINES OF PERSECUTION DAYS

William Fee

On the occasion of the Beatification of the eighty-five Venerable Martyrs of England and Wales on 22 November 1988, the question was asked 'Why were no WOMEN included?' The answer given was that, though many women had suffered for the Faith, none had actually been put to death on the scaffold or at the gallows. It was then pointed out that one of our canonised martyrs, St Philip Howard, did not die at the scaffold or at the gallows but in prison, like many of the heroic Catholic women in the days of persecution. Maybe the time has come when we should revive their memory so that one day the Church may honour at least some of them with the titles of Blessed and Saint. What follows is simply a feeble attempt to arouse some interest in their heroism, leaving it to others more competent than myself to fill in further details. The list given here is by no means complete. There must be many others of whom I have no knowledge. It seems only fitting that we should begin with a short account of the three women martyrs who met with violent deaths and who have already been canonised.

ST MARGARET CLITHEROW: She was born in York in 1553. Her maiden name was Middleton. Her parents had conformed to the newly established Church of England and Margaret was brought up as a Protestant. In 1571 she married a widower, John Clitherow, who like her had been brought up a Protestant. Apparently there were three children, sons William and Henry who became priests and a daughter, Ann, who became a nun. Four years after her marriage she became a Catholic, so impressed was she by the heroism of the priests in York in the midst of persecution. She entered fully into their heroism, her house becoming a centre for celebrating Mass in York and also a school for Catholic children. She co-operated with another heroic Catholic lady near York, Dorothy Vavasour, and together they ran a sort of maternity home where mothers were able to ensure the baptism of their children. Government spies were on the watch. Her house in the Shambles was raided and though the priest escaped, the Mass vestments

were found, thus providing sufficient evidence that 'she had harboured and maintained Jesuits and Seminary Priests', a crime punishable by death in those sad days. On this pretext she was arrested, tried and condemned. Her martyrdom, which took the form of her being crushed to death, took place at York on 25 March 1586. Her last words were 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, have mercy on me'.

ST MARGARET WARD: On 30 August 1588, two people were executed at Tyburn in London, simply and solely for their Catholic faith. One was a Thames waterman, John Roche, the other a heroic Catholic lady, Margaret Ward. She knew of a priest, William Watson, who was in Bridewell Prison. She was determined to help him to escape. Disguising herself she visited him with baskets of provisions for about a month. One day she managed to smuggle a rope into the prison and so, with the help of John Roche, she contrived his escape. The priest managed to get out of the prison but hurt himself in so doing and left the rope hanging. Margaret, his only visitor, was arrested, along with the waterman who had provided the boat. She admitted her guilt, rejoicing that she had been able to deliver an innocent lamb from the hands of the wolves. She was cruelly beaten and eventually executed after refusing to attend the newly Established Church. She was canonised by Pope Paul VI as one of the Forty Martyrs.

ST ANNE LINE: She was the widow of a Hampshire gentleman who had been exiled for the Faith. She herself was a convert to the Catholic faith. Under the direction of the famous Jesuit, Fr Henry Garnet, she spent many years looking after the persecuted priests in London and all this in spite of ill health. On Candlemas Day 1601, her house was raided just as the priest, Fr Page, was about to begin Mass. She was arrested and carried in a chair to the Old Bailey. She was sentenced to be hanged. At Tyburn she declared: 'I am sentenced for harbouring a Catholic Priest, and so far am I from repenting that I wish I could have entertained a thousand'. She suffered death on 27 February 1601. Thus did she obtain her heart's great desire — 'To win the palm of martyrdom'.

BLESSED MARGARET POLE: Margaret had known only sorrow practically from her birth in so far as so many of her relatives were murdered or died tragically. She was left a widow with five young children at the age of twenty-six. Henry VIII chose her as godmother

to Catherine of Aragon's child, the future Queen Mary. The opposition of her son, Cardinal Pole in Rome, to the divorce of the King from Catherine of Aragon embittered the King. He had Margaret arrested and imprisoned in the Tower of London for three years. She was condemned (without trial) on the trumped-up charge of complicity in an insurrection and, at the age of seventy, she was clumsily beheaded on Tower Hill on 28 May 1541.

MARGARET CLEMENT: As Margaret Giggs she had been brought up in the household of St Thomas More and had married John Clement, a physician and friend of the More family. After the suppression of the London Charterhouse of Carthusians, Henry VIII had their saintly prior, John Houghton, put to death and the members of the Order imprisoned in Newgate Prison, being left to starve to death. On 29 May 1537 ten of them were still alive, chained to posts with their hands tied behind their backs. Margaret bribed the gaoler to let her visit them, entering the prison disguised as a milkmaid with a pail full of meat but they were so weak she had to put the food into their mouths and then cleaned their filthy prison cell. The King was surprised that they were still alive. Somehow or other Margaret still contrived to feed them, letting food down from the roof by uncovering the tiles. Eventually this became impossible as a stricter watch was kept on the prison. Later, Margaret left England and died in exile in Malines on 7 July 1570. As she lay dying she told her husband that the monks of the Charterhouse were about her bed, calling her 'to come away with them' and that therefore she could stay no longer.

MARGARET AND FRANCES WEBSTER: One of the most touching and saddest of our stories concerns Margaret Webster and her saintly daughter, Frances. They were a Yorkshire family and their house was a Mass centre and a refuge for priests. Unfortunately, the son, Arthur, conformed to the newly Established Church, betraying both his mother and his sister to the magistrates. They were sent to York Prison and later, Frances was transferred to the Peter Prison. There she discovered that a priest, Fr Finglow, was also a prisoner in a cell directly beneath her. How she managed it is not known but she succeeded in letting light and air into his cell and smuggled in blankets and clothing. She was moved back to York Prison and there reunited with her mother. They ministered to other prisoners, performing the humblest of chores. Overwhelmed by her labours and sufferings, Margaret Webster died

peacefully on 27 May 1585. Her daughter, Frances, prayed that her death might not be too long delayed. She died peacefully a month later on 29 June 1585, receiving the last Sacraments from a priest who risked his life to enter the prison and who came in response to a secret and urgent message from Frances herself.

It is said of them that

> they were to their fellow prisoners an example of good life and constancy in their sufferings for Christ, spending their time in prayer and works of mercy. This blessed maiden, Frances, being come to a marvellous perfection, did most humbly abase herself to do any drudgery, wash dishes, sweep the house or such other servile work, in so glorious a cause.

MARY HUTTON: After the martyrdom of two priests at York in 1583, Blessed William Hart and Blessed Richard Thirkill (Thirkeld), their heads were exposed on the walls of the Ousebridge Prison in York. Just above where the heads were was a prison cell and in it was Mary Hutton, simply and solely because of her faith. She was accused of the theft of the heads and threatened with hanging unless she confessed the fact. Her children, who were imprisoned with her, were threatened with beatings unless they confessed that their mother was guilty of theft. In their fear they admitted it. Their mother was then thrust into an underground dungeon, already infected by a prisoner who had died there. There she did die in 1587 along with her two companions, *Dorothy Vavasour* and *Alice Aldcorne*, also prisoners for the Faith, on three successive days. Two girls, *Margaret Lewtie* and *Alice Bowman* who had helped in the so-called theft, were confined elsewhere and suffered abominable treatment.

DOROTHY VAVASOUR: It would be difficult to find a more heroic Catholic couple during the days of persecution than Doctor Thomas Vavasour and his wife, Dorothy, of Hazelwood Castle, near York. Their house was a home for many missionary priests, but spies were on the watch and Thomas was arrested, kept in close confinement for several years and eventually died in prison. Meanwhile, Dorothy continued her apostolic work and, in particular, along with St Margaret Clitherow, ran a kind of maternity home so that mothers might ensure the baptism of their babies.

At length she was arrested and confined in a filthy narrow cell in

the worst of all the York prisons, known as the Kidcott Tower. The smell was intolerable; the women prisoners were herded in like cattle and here they died one by one. Dorothy became infected and she was then moved to another prison where she died soon afterwards on 25 October 1587.

DAME ISOBEL WHITEHEAD: She was a professed nun of a convent at Ardinton who had been driven from it at its suppression. She travelled from place to place assisting poorer Catholics in the North East. She became very ill and found refuge with a faithful Catholic family in Ardinton itself. Pursuivants raided the Hall at Ardinton and, finding her seriously ill in bed, threatened to kill her unless she revealed the whereabouts of the master of the house and of the priests for whom they were searching, whereupon she and the mistress of the house were arrested and sent as close prisoners to York Castle. They were moved from prison to prison. The sufferings and privations were too much for her and she died for the Faith in prison on 18 March 1587.

ELIZABETH SANDER: She was a Bridgettine nun sent back to England by her Sisters in France to collect alms. She was arrested for her religious beliefs and imprisoned at Winchester. She managed to escape from prison but, after consulting a number of experienced priests, she gave herself up. Eventually she regained her freedom and so was able to rejoin her community in Rouen.

URSULA TAYLOR: One of the problems facing the Catholic Church in England during the days of persecution was the training of our future priests. The law forbade anyone to leave the country to study for the priesthood and prohibited the entry of anyone ordained to the priesthood abroad. A saintly priest, William Allen (afterwards Cardinal) had established a seminary for the training of priests at Douai in France (later transferred to Rheims) and in Rome. Candidates for the priesthood had to be smuggled out of the country and brought back later as priests, but in disguise. A wonderful underground organisation here in the North of England arranged for their journeys. The plan was masterminded by two future martyrs, St John Boste and a layman, Bl. George Errington. A house on the Lawe Top at South Shields was their rendezvous and their headquarters. It was under the supervision of Ursula Taylor of Hebburn, but spies were on the watch and the house was raided as three young students took refuge in it.

On 27 February 1591, Ursula Taylor was arrested, convicted and imprisoned first in York Castle and then in the notorious South Blockhouse at Hull because of her persistent refusal to conform and she would have died there had not kind friends bailed her out.

ISOBEL FOSTER: She was probably the daughter of the lay martyr, Bl. Richard Langley, who was executed at York on 1 December 1586 for harbouring priests. She visited the Catholics imprisoned in York Castle, attending to their needs and providing them with alms. One of the gaolers noticed this. She was arrested and efforts were made to make her conform. She firmly refused and was sent manacled to prison, probably to the very prison she had been visiting. She had a delicate constitution and her gaoler was a man of great cruelty. She forgave him and edified everyone by her conversations, her prayers and her good works. As she lay dying she was heard holding a conversation with someone unseen. 'It is my own father', she said, 'you must be able to see him. He is standing next to you.' She died in prison, as did the child she was expecting, in York Castle on 3 December 1597.

ELEANOR HUNT: She was associated with one of our martyred priests, Bl. Christopher Wharton, who was arrested in her house. She was condemned for harbouring him. Death was to be the penalty but she was reprieved and left to die in prison. After years of hardship she died in York Prison, probably in 1601.

MARY TREGIAN: When St Cuthbert Mayne was captured in the house of Francis and Mary Tregian at Golden, near Truro, in 1577, Francis was deprived of his large estates and sentenced to imprisonment for life. In 1579 his wife, Mary, set out for London to try and help her husband, taking her three young children with her. A fourth child was born on the way. She got permission to join him in the Fleet Prison and there they lived for twenty years. In 1603 he was released and banished. Mary remained in London, surviving her husband by several years. Two of her sons were to die in prison.

GRACE BABTHORPE: She was born in or about 1571. She married Sir Ralph Babthorpe and along with him had to endure every insidious kind of economic and social torture because of the practice of the one true Faith. She was often brought before the Commissioners, fined and

restricted in so many ways. She persisted in sheltering priests and kept the records concerning some of the martyrs. After the death of her husband, she crossed over to the Continent and became a professed nun of St Monica's Convent, Louvain, where she died in February 1621.

DOROTHY LAWSON: Perhaps the best known of our heroines, at least in the North of England, was Dorothy Lawson. She was born in 1580. Unfortunately, her husband conformed to the new Established State religion, but as he lay dying, Dorothy brought a priest to him and he was reconciled to the Church. She came to live at Heaton where her house became a Mass centre. She secured a Jesuit as her chaplain. From there she moved to St Anthony's, Walker, where she had a house built with the name of Jesus inscribed upon a wall. This new house was also to become a Mass centre and among her chaplains were two future martyrs, St Henry Morse and Bl. Christopher Robinson The house became a centre of Catholic activity in the area. She visited priests who were in prison in Newcastle. During a plague she ministered to the victims.

Wonderful descriptions are still in existence of the Holy Week ceremonies and Christmas celebrations which took place in her house. She even arranged retreats for Jesuits and was a great benefactor of that Society. As far as we know she was never arrested, fined or imprisoned, even though these were persecution times. She died at her home of consumption on 26 March 1632. So respected was she in the area that a priest was allowed to officiate publicly at her burial.

MARGARET POWELL: Margaret was reduced to poverty through her sufferings for the Faith. Her chief activity was ministering to priests in prison and, though her husband was a Protestant, she managed to maintain a priest in her house in London. Her house was raided whilst Bl. Thomas Bullaker was celebrating Mass in it. She and her son, aged twelve, who was serving the Mass, were arrested. At her trial in October 1642, she was threatened with death for her religion. She expressed joy at the prospect of dying for her faith. She was sent back to prison and on hearing that the priest taken with her was to be hanged and that her sentence was deferred, she burst into tears but, quickly recovering herself, she humbly offered her new lease of life to God.

JANE CORBY: She belonged to a famous coal-owning family near

Durham and was associated with two famous recusant families, the Salvins of Croxdale and the Forcers of Harbour House, Plawsworth. Her husband conformed to the new religion yet was willing to pay her recusancy fines. At this time many good Catholic families crossed over to Ireland to escape the severity of the penal laws, and Jane made it her business to collect necessities for them and convey these and letters to Ireland. She is mentioned frequently as being arrested for recusancy and was finally confined to a five-mile limit from her own house at Elvet in Durham on 17 May 1616. The records of St Oswald's Parish, Durham, mention her burial on 8 May 1644, some four months before the martyrdom of her nephew, Bl. Ralph Corby.

There are many other heroic women of penal days about whom we know practically nothing apart from the fact that they suffered for the Faith and in many cases died in prison. We would do well to recall at least their names.

Agnes Johnson died in the Ouseburn Prison in York in 1571, as did *Alice Williamson. Ursula Foster*, or *Forster*, died there in 1577. Records of the York prisons mention *Elizabeth Wilkinson* and *Isobel Bowman* who, when asked why they did not attend the services of the newly Established Church, replied that there was no altar, no sacrifice, no sacrament.

In 1591 a priest, Fr John Ann, was arrested in the home of Mr and Mrs Murton. The three were put in irons and *Mrs Murton* was held in the custody of one of the pursuivants.

In 1596 three laymen, George Errington, William Gibson Snr, and William Gibson Jnr, were condemned to death for aiding and abetting priests, and two women who were associated with them in their work were condemned to death by being burnt at the stake. The two women were reprieved and were destined to spend many years in prison.

At the Winchester Assizes of 1591, seven maiden women of good families were tried and condemned to death for assisting the martyr priest, Bl. Roger Diconson. The Judge reprieved them and they were sent back to prison. On hearing of the decision they wept, begging that the sentence be carried out so that they could die with their 'ghostly' father.

In 1585 a young man made three attempts to cross over to France

to study for the priesthood. His first release was procured by *Lady Lovett*, who was herself a prisoner for the Faith in the Fleet Prison in London.

In connection with the martyrdom of Bl. Christopher Robinson at Carlisle in 1597 there is a document written two years later recording the fact that Leonard and *Margaret Musgrave* had been convicted for having voluntarily and feloniously received, comforted and maintained Christopher, a seminary priest, in their home and were not being granted a royal pardon. This means that Margaret had been in prison for two years.

In July 1598, a *Mrs Jane Wiseman* was arraigned and convicted of aiding and assisting the martyr priest, Bl. John Jones. She was condemned to death but the sentence was never carried out.

In 1592 *Dorothy Salvin* of the famous Croxdale family, along with other members of her family, was cast into prison for recusancy and there 'retained'. To be 'retained' frequently meant the condemnation to the martyrdom of a slow death.

On 10 September 1593 the house of a Mr and Mrs Claxton at the Waterhouse, near Durham, was raided by pursuivants. The priest, St John Boste, who had just celebrated Mass, was taken prisoner, so was *Grace Claxton* (her husband was already in prison for the Faith) and *Lady Margaret Neville.* Grace was sentenced to death but reprieved. The ultimate fate of these two women is not known. A letter from the Bishop of Durham, Tobie Matthew, speaks of a Lady Catherine Neville as having harboured John Boste at a farm near Lanchester which belonged to her and that he had caused her to be apprehended for receiving and harbouring seminary priests. The letter is dated 27 May 1598.

On 9 August 1600, three of our martyrs were put to death at Dryburn, Durham. One was a priest, Thomas Palasor, and two laymen, John Norton and John Talbot. They had been arrested at the home of John Norton at Ravensworth, near Gateshead. The two laymen were convicted for harbouring and aiding the priest and with them condemned for the same offence was John Norton's wife, *Margaret.* She was reprieved because she was expecting a child.

On Candlemas Day 1601 the house of St Anne Line in London was raided. Fr Page, the priest in the house, managed to escape but

Anne Line and a *Mrs Gage* were arrested. Anne was condemned to death, so was Mrs Gage, but she was set free because of her noble birth and the influence of a certain nobleman.

Records of York Prison in 1635 mention five Catholics who were in prison for recusancy — one of them was *Elizabeth Cottard*, and her crime was 'harbouring a priest'. The priest and Elizabeth were sent to prison. Five years later the priest died in prison but she remained there for at least some ten years.

Many others might be mentioned but we know so little about them, beyond the facts that they remained faithful in spite of imprisonment, fines, confiscation of property and continual harassment: *Eleanor Forcer* of Harbour House, near Plawsworth, Durham, *Dorothy Salvin* and *Rebecca Salvin* of Croxdale, *Jane Horsely* of Old Elvet, Durham, and *Susan Brown* of York.

Maybe one of the most heroic of our women, but about whom we know practically nothing, was the widow of the canonised martyr, Swithun Wells, who was arrested along with him as Mass was being celebrated in their house in Holborn, London. This was in 1591. He was executed and she was condemned to death along with him but, being reprieved, she was left in prison and died there eleven years later.

With the passing of years the severity of the persecution died down apart from the outburst at the time of the Titus Oates plot. Several women, however, were to spend many years in prison for the faith especially in the notorious Ousegate Prison in York, where the cells were damp and were flooded as the nearby river rose. Among those condemned were *Catherine Lascelles*, the *Honourable Mary Fairfax*, the *Honourable Margaret Metham*, and *Mary* and *Margaret More*, the descendants of St Thomas More.

So much for the brief accounts, in some cases very brief, of the lives, sufferings and deaths of these heroines of penal days. Maybe these notes will revive interest in them and arouse devotion to them. We owe them a great debt of gratitude for it is through their heroism that the Faith has been handed down intact to us.

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CHARLES LARKIN, RADICAL REFORMER, 1800–1879

T.P. Macdermott

The social and political scene in nineteenth-century Newcastle was adorned with a variety of distinguished characters, amongst whom Charles Larkin was one of the most eminent. There were few aspects of local life in which he did not become involved at one time or another, and his contributions were noted both for the intensity of feeling he exhibited and the vigour of language in which he expressed himself.

Charles Larkin was, in fact, born in London, in the same room in Kensington as Charles James Fox, and in consequence was christened Charles Fox Larkin. Both his parents were Catholics. His mother, of whom little is known, was from the English Midlands. His father, Charles Larkin, was of Irish stock and appears first as a gardener in the service of Ravensworth Castle. In later life he became the landlord of the 'Black Boy' in the Groat Market, and would appear to have been one of the leading Catholics in Newcastle. He is recorded as being the Secretary of the Newcastle upon Tyne Catholic Friendly Society, which was enrolled at the General Quarter Sessions on 8 December 1823.

There is no record of the Larkin children, apart from Charles and an older son, John, who trained for the priesthood and finished his clerical career as Bishop of Toronto. Charles was also intended for the priesthood and to this end was enrolled at Ushaw. For whatever reason, he abandoned the religious vocation and turned instead to medicine. He was placed under the tutelage of William Ingham, a prominent Newcastle surgeon, and apparently progressed satisfactorily through his training.

After qualifying, Larkin married and set up in practice in Pilgrim Street. That he was a competent practitioner in his chosen profession is evident from various references and he particularly enhanced his reputation during the major cholera epidemic of 1831 when he was commended for his assiduous attention to the poor of Westgate district who had been committed to his care by the Board of Health.

Larkin was not content, however, to restrict his activities to the medical profession in which he showed such promise. His political

ardour was such that he felt constrained to be involved, and in that era of reform in the early 1830s he was often heard agitating on behalf of the radical policies of the Northern Political Union. In fact, this body, which was set up at a meeting on 27 June 1831, was the direct result of a motion proposed by Larkin. Larkin was a master of invective, and it is suggested that it was only the spirit of the times that prevented him from the arrest and punishment that his utterances would have earned not long before. His speeches on reform were very hard-hitting and his attacks on the Queen's role brought him accusations of high treason. It would appear that a warrant for his arrest existed at this point but was never executed. The passing of the 1832 Reform Act changed the situation.

Larkin's eloquence was also widely displayed in the defence of his own religious beliefs and of his Catholic faith. Early in the 1830s, he took to task a Captain Gordon, an anti-popery lecturer, who was in the habit of denouncing the papacy as the 'mother of harlots and abominations of the earth'. Larkin challenged the captain to a debate in Brunswick Place Methodist Chapel. The challenge was accepted but, oddly, on the night the disputants were changed. The Protestant side was represented by the Reverend Armstrong, an Irish ex-Catholic, and Larkin was replaced by a Mr Falvey, a barrister. However, Larkin contributed to the affair in a pamphlet, in which he forcibly set out the Catholic position.

The year 1836 saw the publication of a book entitled *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, which purported to describe gross immoralities in a Montreal nunnery. Larkin's reaction to this event was a pamphlet called *A Letter to the Protestants of Newcastle*, in which he set out to refute the allegations. He would appear to have done this effectively since he was presented, as a consequence, with a tea and coffee service, plus £100, by the Catholic Defence Society.

The year 1836 seems to have been a very productive one for Larkin. For some months he published a newspaper called the *Newcastle Standard*. [1] The paper did not prosper and it is reported that it expired 'amid bailiffs and a blazing row the Editor had with his priest, Fr Worswick'. Still, in 1836, Larkin delivered a series of lectures upon the evils of the connection between Church and State, and these gave him a measure of popularity amongst the Nonconformists which for a time matched that of his co-religionists. Unfortunately, little remains

in print of Larkin's output and the present-day student is denied the opportunity of judging its merit.

The early 1830s was, of course, the period which saw the first fruits of Catholic Emancipation, enacted in 1829, and Newcastle, with its recusant traditions and considerable Irish presence, appears to have been concerned in the course of events. Certainly, the coverage of the Emancipation campaign by the local press suggest widespread interest, and the role of Daniel O'Connell and his election to Parliament were generously reported. It is no surprise to find that when O'Connell came to Newcastle in 1835 he received a rapturous welcome. O'Connell's invitation was officially from the local Radicals, but the procession to greet him was headed by a banner of the Newcastle Hibernian Society, and the keynote address to him was made by Larkin. This highly embellished address extolled O'Connell's work on behalf of Catholic Emancipation, made a number of references to Anglo-Irish relations, and ended with a peroration about 'the long centuries of injustice, misrule and oppression Ireland has endured from England'. O'Connell seems to have been impressed by Larkin's oration and is reported to have referred to him as the 'Demosthenes of the North'. Not everybody was likewise pleased by the whole affair and the recently founded *Newcastle Journal* remarked that 'The Irish Big Beggarman is actually to be exhibited alive, and fed, in Newcastle . . . There is not an Irish hod-man or Popish pig-jobber within ten miles around but will attend'.

Similar anti-Catholic sentiments surfaced in the mid-1840s, when the 'Maynooth Question' controversy arose from the proposal of Peel's Government to increase its grant to Maynooth Seminary. Interestingly, there is no record of any activity by Larkin in this, although the anti-Popery campaign when it manifested itself in Newcastle, received a vigorous, Irish-led, Catholic response.

The next major recrudescence of anti-Catholicism came in 1850 with the 'Papal Aggression' episode on the restoration of the English Catholic Hierarchy. Larkin, on this occasion, entered the fray with his customary enthusiasm and devoted a series of lectures in the defence of the Catholic position. Among the titles he used were: 'The Pope and Cardinal Wiseman', 'Lord John Russell and the Durham Letter', and 'The Re-establishment of the Catholic Hierarchy'. Two years later we find Larkin at Dumfries defending the Catholic position against a Dr Haigh. His championship of the cause must have pleased the local

Catholics as they presented him with a gold watch.

Larkin's theological argumentativeness and vitriolic oratory were once again paraded at the annual meeting of the subscribers to the Central News Room in 1842. There, it was proposed by a Mr Chapman, 'the pious banker', to close the room on Sundays on the grounds that its opening would be a desecration of the Sabbath and a violation of the fourth commandment. Larkin's response was direct: 'I tell Mr Chapman and all who support him boldly and to their very beards that in coming forwards . . . they exhibit the grossest and thickest theological and Scriptural ignorance'. He went on to assert that the Mosaic law and the books of the Prophets were out of date and relevant to Judaism alone, and he poured scorn on his opponents. His linguistic style is illustrated by a couple of quotations from this debate:

> What right have you to take your pail of whiting and your whitening brush and whitewash me into a spectre of holiness? [and] God will accept of no sacrifice but that which is willing, and one heartfelt burst of prayer and penitence at any moment is worth all the Sabbaths and all the sacrifices of all the Scribes and Pharisees of this world.

Larkin's eloquence was used not only against the enemies of his Church: he could be equally uncompromising against his fellow Catholics if he felt that the occasion demanded it. He was a consistent opponent of the practice of charging pew rents, and was particularly incensed when in September 1844 it was announced that the opening of St Mary's Cathedral would be by ticket only. Larkin attacked this decision with a pamphlet, and his invective was typical. The tract is full of phrases like 'never since Judas sold the veritable body and blood of Our Lord was there anything more treacherous to the interests of eternal and sacred truth', and 'nor could the world's baseness, in the wildest imagination of its corruption and depravity, offer a greater insult to God and to his religion than to sell the mystical sacrifice of the body and blood of his most sacred Son as an exhibition for money'.

This championship of his own faith was not confined to religious or theological environments. There is some evidence that it was a cause of disputation in his political affairs, and it appears to have been either a cause or a pretext for disruption within the Northern Political Union. John Laing, a member of the Council of the N.P.U., with an attack on the 'superstitions and savage tyrants of Catholic Spain and Portugal' brought a prompt riposte from Larkin in defence of his Iberian co-

religionists. Another prominent local politician, John Fyfe, joined in the argument against Larkin, and the rift widened.

In his later years Larkin appears to have been less active but his time was often spent writing and speaking on topics outside religion and politics. It has been said that his contribution to other subjects showed his real merit as a student and scholar since they reflected more his serious thinking than his partisan temper as a protagonist. His contributions by lectures and articles covered a wide spectrum, including poetry and philosophy, capital punishment, public health and social affairs. His last appearance on a public platform was, interstingly, when he came out of semi-retirement in October 1872 to speak at a monster demonstration on the Town Moor calling for an amnesty for Irish Fenian prisoners.

CHARLES LARKIN [1800–1879]

Larkin's long and lively career came to a peaceful end on 28 February 1879, and he was laid to rest in Elswick Cemetery after a private but well-attended funeral. His friends in Newcastle and district promoted a public subscription and had erected over his grave an imposing monument which had his bust under a canopy. The monument was unveiled by Joseph Cowen M.P. amidst a large audience of Larkin's friends and a wide circle of people by whom he had been admired. In addition to the usual brief dedication on the monument, there is this verse:

> 'The Orator is gone, and from this hour
> Hath passed a voice, a presence, and a power'. [2]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Copies of this paper are preserved in the Newspaper Library at the British Library, Colindale.
2. The monument can still be seen in Elswick Cemetery, somewhat weather-beaten, and minus the bust, which was vandalised.

R. Welford, *Men of Mark Twixt Tyne & Tweed*, Vol. III, pp.7–12. P. Cadogan, *Early Radical Newcastle.* Local Biographies, Vols 1 & 2, Newcastle Central Library, Local Collection. Local News Cuttings, Vol. 2, NCL, Local Collection. Vertical File: Politics 12846: Parl. Reform 1832, NCL, Local Collection. Owen Collection, NCL, Local Collection.

PUGIN AND ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

P. McGuinness

Great things were happening in Newcastle upon Tyne in the 1830s. The centre of the town was being redeveloped, and religious and political changes were in the air. The ground once occupied by religious communities in the northern part of the medieval town was being transformed by Richard Grainger into a series of broad streets with public buildings, shops and houses which even now enhance the town.

Religious toleration allowed Nonconformists to play a more open and active role in the community, and churches and chapels were erected to cater for the expanding population. The manner of selecting the town government was reformed in that the power once held by the ancient merchant guilds had been broken, and candidates from the general public were now nominated, although at this time most came from the business community and were voted into office by 'ratepayers' only.

The Roman Catholic members of the community were not slow to take advantage of the situation. Several were elected to serve on the new-style Council in 1835, and from their ranks came men who were to hold office as aldermen, sheriffs, and mayors. They did not bring any new political thinking into the council chamber for they appear, from the evidence of the voting registers, to have given their support to local candidates from the national political parties in the Parliamentary elections.

The involvement of Roman Catholics in local government and the fact that they held positions of influence may have enabled them to bring to fruition the dream of Fr James Worswick. In 1798 he had built a chapel behind the house in Pilgrim Street and it had servedsthe community well until the great influx of people, due to Tyneside's industrial expansion, in the early nineteenth century. A new large church was needed to cater for the large increase in the Catholic population, and a committee was formed in 1838 under the chairmanship of Fr Riddell, curate of St Andrew's, to raise funds and seek an architect for the project.[1]

The foremost Catholic architect of the day was Augustus Welby Pugin.[2] However, he was a very busy man, with commissions ranging the length and breadth of the British Isles, and as well as preparing drawings and sketches of buildings down to intimate details of furnishings, he also travelled throughout the country supervising the progress of projects on site. Amid all this activity he doubtless received many requests to undertake new commissions and one of these was an invitation to design and build a new large parish church in Newcastle upon Tyne.

The fact that he accepted may have been seen as a feather in the cap of each of the gentlemen of the Committee but, in the light of

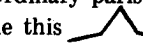
AUGUSTUS WELBY NORTHMORE PUGIN, 1811–1852

subsequent events, it appears that they were very fortunate. Relations were not always amicable, however, and Pugin's answers to a string of queries raised, often more than once, have recently come to light among papers deposited in the Northumberland Record Office. There are twenty-five letters written by Pugin, mostly to William Dunn of Bath House, Secretary to the Committee, but others addressed to Fr Riddell and to Bishop Mostyn, the Vicar Apostolic, and in them the architect patiently explained and sometimes defended his decisions. The whole correspondence covers the period from January 1842 to November 1844. [3]

In the first of the letters, dated 26 January 1841 addressed to 'Rev Mr Riddell, 73 Pilgrim Street', Pugin reassured Fr Riddell that the sketches produced after a visit to the site of the proposed new church showed a building 90 feet wide, including buttresses, and some 142 feet long, 'this being the whole length of the ground'. Seating accommodation was for '1200 persons on the floor of a church of these dimensions allowing sufficient room for chancel, chapels and tower'. He stressed that the seating would all be at floor level as, in his opinion, galleries had no place in Catholic churches. [4]

Whilst visiting Stockton, St Mary's, begun in 1841, he wrote on 13 February 1842 to advise Dunn of an impending visit to Newcastle and promised to write later to give his exact time of arrival. [5] It appears that he had sought plans of the ground at Westgate in order to prepare improved plans but that these were not available, for he wrote in March 1842 that the plans had not yet been received. He hoped that they had not gone astray and pointed out that without them he could not begin work on the commission and also hoped that he would not 'be innocently blamed for inattention'. [6]

The missing plan, or a duplicate, must have been received, for in a letter of 30 April 1842 he answered queries raised by the Committee about the roof arrangement, size of windows and various minor points. The roof arrangement envisaged by the Committee was a single ridge with sloping roofs over the side aisles, but Pugin had selected three ridge roofs. The fear expressed by the Committee was that if there were a heavy fall of snow followed by a quick thaw, the gutters might not be able to handle the water. Pugin assured them that the gutter width and the lead lining proposed would prevent any ingress of water. He also strongly argued for the proposal as being the only one that suits

> a church of aisles of such vast width. I fear that any other arrangement would look exceedingly ill. In ordinary parish churches where the aisles are not more than 14 or 15 feet wide this  roof answers well but in the proposed church the aisles are so wide that I think the external and internal effect would suffer greatly. And I am also of the opinion that (the) aisle roofs would be brought so low as to render the interior even oppressive when filled with people.

A great deal of thought had obviously gone into the roof design and it was not to be rejected lightly.

The plans which Pugin submitted must have been examined by the Committee with the proverbial fine-tooth comb as many questions were raised. The need for a turret shown on the plan was queried and Pugin explained that it was to give access to an organ loft sited on the south aisle to give a good view of the altar and choir. Also, the plans, it seemed, showed no access between the side-chapel and the choir, and here the architect admitted his error. The alignment of the north chapel was not symmetrical and when this was queried, Pugin pointed out that it was no disadvantage and drew attention to the irregularities in many old churches and how this could improve the effect. In the Committee's careful scrutiny of the plans, it had also been observed that the windows of the north aisle were smaller than those of the south aisle, and in reply Pugin said that this was a common feature of early churches. The style of the windows would be the same but the north side had one light less since it was the cold side of the building.

The next query was most important for it concerned the cost of the proposed building. Pugin carefully pointed out that without accurate scale drawings it was unreasonable to estimate the cost. The proposals needed careful calculations and he issued a warning regarding the foundations. These might prove to be a large item of expenditure, as trial borings had shown that it would be necessary to dig fairly deep to reach solid ground, a great deal of water being present — a common condition experienced in many present-day archaeological excavations in Newcastle. Pugin pointed out that this part of the building must not be neglected even though it was unseen, for if the foundations were not sound all other work would be a waste of time.

A tower and spire (no height stated) were part of the original plan and a rough estimate put the cost at some two or three thousand pounds. A tower high enough to serve as a porch would cost about

£500. The seating, altar and fittings were estimated at £1,200. Once again, it would be the foundations which would absorb most of the cost if the spire were to be added at a later date. The location of the tower must have been questioned as Pugin observed that the proposed position would leave the south aisle clear for seating. Concluding this letter, Pugin turned once more to the cost of the building and gave an assurance that when the working drawings were finished an accurate assessment, including the cost of the foundations, would be made. The Committee felt that the cost should not exceed seven thousand pounds and Pugin assured them 'I will do my best to accomplish it, but it will be a vast building and swallow up an immense deal of material'.[7]

The cost was raised yet again and in a letter dated 5 May 1842 Pugin doubted his ability to include the lower portion of the tower within the estimate. He reiterated the fact that most of the money would go on the church structure 'for it is a great building'. His early calculations had included the cost of altars but not their furniture as this could be added later, and he went on to assure the Committee that he was as anxious as they were 'to get as much as possible done for the outlay'. It is apparent from this letter that at this stage there were only sketches of the church and that working drawings had not yet been prepared.

Pugin again defended his roof arrangement and remarked that Dunn 'could not have perfectly understood my last letter touching the triple roof'. He again stressed the lowness of the aisle roofs in the suggestion of a single ridge with sloping side aisle roofs, especially if a clerestory were to be added to the building, and remarked that it would not 'properly belong to the period which I have selected'. He closed this letter with a reference to 'an absurd account of the proposed church in tablet' [*The Tablet*]. This had likened the building to the church of St Nicholas, Newcastle upon Tyne, and stated that it would have three spires. Pugin reminded them that the Anglican church actually had five pinnacles, not spires. The article had also called the building a cathedral 'when I have not attempted anything but a large parochial church'.[8]

A letter from the Committee dated 30 June 1842 reached Pugin in Cork. From his reply, dated 6 July 1842, it seems that the members were becoming a little impatient about the cost still not being known, for he had promised to begin the preparation of the working drawings

as soon as he had returned to England. The Committee had requested that the cost be reduced to six thousand five hundred pounds, but Pugin doubted if this could be met, again due to the size of the building. However, now that working drawings were to be prepared accurate costs would be submitted and the Committee would then have a choice of meeting the possible cost of seven thousand pounds or of bringing it within the figure they proposed. Incidentally, the letter was posted in Cork on 6 July, arrived in Carlisle in 9 July and reached Newcastle the same day, a testimony of the speed of the postal services of the day.[9]

A letter from Pugin dated 10 July 1842 requested confirmation of the leading dimensions of the site 'to prevent the possibility of mistake'.[10] This was followed by a letter on 23 July to Fr Riddell in which he confirmed that the lower cost would not meet the proposals. From his minute calculations, Pugin gave the following breakdown of costs:

For the building, including tower carried up to form a porch and roof over, making drains, spouting, paving, glazing, doors and all compleat except fittings, allowing foundations to be 6 ft. 6 in. Deep	£6,700. 0. 0.
all the concrete below that depth to be put in by admeasurement at . . . . . per cubit yard	
The Seats, font, pulpit, Sacristy fittings, Sedilia and high altar	£ 706. 0. 0.
The great rood screen and rood side screens, stalls, screens of chapels at East End and altars and reredos of end chapels	£ 820. 0. 0.

The last item was considered as not being absolutely essential and could be omitted. The Committee were assured that the design had not been 'unduly in the least extravagance of ornament or enrichment'. He did, however, remind them of the vastness of the building. He also defended the proposed design as appropriate for the site, pointing out that it was so completely surrounded by lofty houses 'that a low church would appear crushed and mere aisles without high gables would never answer'. A visit was to be made to Newcastle with the working drawings so that there could be a full discussion with the Committee. At the end of this

letter, Pugin applied a little pressure on the Committee members, stating that it was

> of no use for me to raise a building to meet a given sum and when it is completed for every body to be dissatisfied and disappointed at the effect. I would much rather give up the business altogether. I have given the subject every consideration, arranged the building particulars with reference to the site and gone into every detail of construction and I am decidedly of the opinion that anything less than the present design would be a failure.

He ended by repeating his intention to 'decline the business' if the Committee did not agree either to reduce the length of the building or to increase their expenditure. If it should happen that he did resign he would ask nothing for his drawings but request only his travelling expenses.[11]

Two days later Pugin again wrote to Fr Riddell, this time from Liverpool, confirming that he would call at Newcastle on his way to Edinburgh. He was concerned as to whether he would be able to convince everyone that his views were best. He stated that he distrusted a system whereby a commission began with a low estimate and was then built up with extras as the project progressed. He much preferred to look at the difficulties and let everyone know them before there was any commitment. He thought it more honourable to decline a business which could not be carried out in a satisfactory manner.[12] From this early correspondence it is difficult to know whether a meeting was held when he came to Newcastle or whether he spoke only to Fr Riddell.

A letter from Edinburgh on 30 July listed the cost of various furnishings and from figures written in another hand, it seems that the font, seats, high altar, pulpit and sacristy fittings, costing some £620 in all, were considered immediately necessary.[13] On his travels yet again, Pugin wrote from Beaufort Castle, Inverness, on 5 August, to arrange another meeting on his way south.[14] (The work in Scotland was a monastic restoration for Lord Lovat.) He was next apologising, on 12 August, for the delay in forwarding the draft contract as he was recovering from a severe inflammation after being bitten by some venomous creature.[15]

When it did arrive, the draft contract was worded as being made between

> George Myers and Richard Wilson of Hull in the County of York, builders, and the Right Rev Father in God Bishop of Abydos and Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District and the Right Rev William Riddell for the erection of a church in Newcastle upon Tyne to be dedicated in honour of . . . (blank).

The contractors agreed to build a church 'to the plans and specification and to the entire satisfaction of A. Welby Pugin the master of the work'. The aspect of the cost had been cleared and evidently Pugin had had his way as the expenditure was set at £7,406. The Committee had obviously raised their sights, but reluctantly.

The draft contract contained clauses outlining the responsibilities on both sides. There was a completion date of 1 July 1844 with a penalty of ten pounds per week as long as it could be shown that the delay was the fault of the contractor. The final decision regarding the altars and other internal fittings had to be given on or before 1 October 1843. Payments were to be made to the contractor as each phase of the building was completed on the receipt of a certificate authorising payment from the master of the works. The architect was to receive his 5 per cent fee at the same time.[16]

Despite having met the Committee and feeling satisfied that all their questions had been fully answered, there is yet another letter in which Pugin, writing from Alton Towers on 16 August 1842, replied to further queries. One in particular concerned the foundations and Pugin reminded the Committee that these were to be paid for by measurement. Regarding the possibility of extra work, Pugin pointed out that it could be done by 'measure and value' and that Myers would provide the prices. It was also pointed out that this was an expensive way to do the work and it was proposed that before any work was done, the cost should be worked out by the architect and then agreed before proceeding. The tone of the letter suggests that the Committee may have proposed another architect for this work as Pugin said that he felt that he was 'so well deserving the confidence of the Committee that I could settle these matters'.

It should be remembered, of course, that no extra costs were anticipated regarding the superstructure, as all had been provided for in the design, and the building when completed would be ready for divine worship. Fears had been expressed about a possible ingress of water during the digging of the foundations and Pugin gave a reassurance that no harm would come to the concrete foundations. There was also

a question about the floor levels as the sloping site presented difficulties. Pugin had decided to raise the west end slightly above the road level. This meant that much more work would be necessary at the east end to level the floor. A suggestion must have been made to lower the platform for the high altar and choir, but Pugin pointed out that the 'interior would be spoilt' if this were done. Pugin returned to the matter of the foundations, informing the Committee that a report was due from which the cost could be assessed accurately. In a postscript to this letter he mentioned that he had just 'procured for Lincoln Minster the most glorious authorities for carving I have ever seen', and suggested that the roof corbels in the nave of the new church be carved in the form of 'a succession of angels playing on various musical instruments', which he felt would be much preferable to the shields normally placed there.[17]

Work had begun on the building before the contract had been formally signed and in a letter dated 15 February 1843 there is the first hint of any disagreement. Pugin had raised an objection to a clause concerning his own role in the project. The clause in question included the wording to the effect that the building should be completed 'to the satisfaction of the Rev Dr Mostyn, the Rev Mr Riddell, myself, and such other architects as they may appoint'. That another architect might be involved was certainly not to Pugin's liking. In his letter he pointed out that as master of the work he was bound by conscience to see that all was done correctly, 'the sentence as it stands amounts to a want of confidence and reduces me to a mere cypher in the business', and he expressed the hope that the wording had been included in ignorance of the general practice. If, however, the clause were to stand, then he could not continue to 'act for a day'. He asked that the clause stand as he had originally written it but would accept the insertion of the phrase 'that in the event of my death the contractor is to compleat the work to the satisfaction of such architect as the Lord Bishop and the Rev Mr Riddell may appoint'.

The queries continued to arrise. The next one was about the finish of the porch roof. It was to be vaulted but only after the tower had been erected to enable the load on the walls to be set correctly. Then there was a question about the type and size of the slates. This time Pugin raised no objection but did say that his choice had been based on experience. He had chosen the same type as the roof of St George's, London, and these had been proof against 'a succession of

tremendous gales and one compleat Hurricane', when other roofs had been damaged. He did not press the point since it had no bearing on the architectural effect of the building. Myers asked for a meeting with the Committee as he had queries about certain clauses in the contract and wanted them sorted out.[18]

Writing next from Cork on 24 June 1843, Pugin informed the Committee that he would be coming to Newcastle and would bring the drawing of the organ for discussion.[19] The following month a drawing of the tower was sent. It was a greater work than anticipated, containing some 6,000 cubic feet of stonework. Stress was again laid on the need to ensure a good foundation so that the spire, to be added later, would produce no problems. It does sound as though the Committee may have suggested some 'cheaper' compromise. They were also informed that the sedilia would be in Caen stone with oak seats and be such 'a beautiful job and please you much'. Pugin was on his way to Ireland but proposed to return from Belfast via Glasgow to call in at Newcastle.[20]

A letter from Liverpool on 15 July 1843 indicated that the meeting in Newcastle had been abandoned, with regret, due to the death of Fr Worswick. However, a report on the building was forthcoming. He said that he enclosed with the letter a drawing of the organ gallery and stair, the material of which was to be best red pine. The cost and size of the slates had again been questioned. The original quotation for the slates had been £1.7s.0d. per yard, but Pugin observed that if a change were made a new price would have to be quoted for the slates selected by the Committee. As to size, Pugin had no preference. A grading of size from large at the bottom of the roof diminishing to the ridge as each course was laid had been suggested, but Pugin told the Committee that he considered the smaller the slate the better the roof would look.

Next, the quality of the mortar had been questioned, part of a section examined having been 'frost affected'. Just when the inspection had been made is not stated but it much have been earlier on in the work as there is little likelihood of frost in July when the matter was raised. Pugin assured the Committee that all was well and that he was perfectly satisfied and 'did not hesitate to say that in due time the walls would be like as rock'. Pugin also reassured the Committee on the question of the lead roof guttering. An inspection of the works at this time had proved satisfactory to Pugin and he said that he was

issuing instructions for the steps and tiling of the choir, chapels and sanctuary floors. The drawing of the tower was withdrawn as the Committee decided not to proceed along the lines proposed, but, sadly, there is no record of what was actually proposed, though it is hard to see how it could have differed from what was in fact built. [21] The Committee seem to have pressed for slates of varying size as the rows ascended. Pugin did not consider it an important point but, in a letter of 25 July 1843, reiterated his opinion that a uniform size was best and that the perspective effect would give the appearance of reducing size. [22]

A notice of a visit by Pugin in company with Myers is addressed, on 23 September, from the 'London & Birmingham Railway'.[23] Pugin suffered severe bouts of illness during his working life and in an undated letter in 1844 to the Bishop he reported his return from a journey and was thankful 'to say I feel quite strong again'. Work on the building was proceeding apace and already the credence table and other fittings were on their way from Birmingham. Seat numbering plates were being considered and the architect proposed using roman numerals, which he stated would be quite legible and go well with the church. He also expressed his intention of being present at the opening.[24]

Pugin's letters give the general impression that all was proceeding smoothly and he dealt with all the queries and niggling repetition of trivial points in a patient and calm way. After all, the Committee were worried about the overall cost and no doubt sought to control the expenditure carefully, and even to have suggested ways of cutting costs. That not all had been harmonious, however, is all too apparent from a letter from Pugin dated 9 July 1844. [25] The master of the works had been busy working on one of his publications during which time he had received several letters from Newcastle and, now that his book was ready, he hastened to reply, and in a long missive poured out quite a tirade against the gentlemen involved.

While the building was in progress it seems that there had been a great deal of interference from the Committee with the actual work. Matters came to a head when the Committee issued a notice to stop the work of laying the quarry tiles on the floor adjoining the columns for the organ loft. Members were worried that an extra charge would be made if the tiles were laid and then lifted to allow for the foundations for the columns. This seemingly small point was the proverbial straw

which broke the camel's back. Myers, the contractor, had ignored the notice and while Pugin agreed that he should not have done this he went on to give the reasons for Myers' method, pointing out that it was standard practice to set the whole tile floor and then lift any tiles where necessary, the method incurring no extra charge.

The whole tone of the letter shows not only Pugin's concern over the way the Committee had handled things but also the relationship he generally had with his employers, and merits quoting more fully.

> I was however totally unprepared for the manner in which the building was to be carried on or I should at once have declined the business. I had always been the friend and adviser of my employers. And these employers for the most part ecclesiastics whom I served in love and conscience and whose interest was as my own, and who placed entire confidence in my knowledge and integrity. With these reciprocal feelings I have been enabled by the blessing of God to effect in a few years a greater revival of antient excellence that could possibly have been anticipated and I may most sincerely state that in these endeavours I have been well and faithfully seconded by Mr Myers, who has on many occasions done much at even a personal loss to meet my wishes. These circumstances have never been understood or appreciated by the Newcastle Church Committee. From the very beginning I have been considered as any ordinary man of business looking out only for himself. I have heard of nothing but penalties, sureties and securities. Even at the very outset I was called in and ordered out like a Pork contractor in a workhouse and subjected to indignities which I only submitted to out of the respect I felt for the Rev Mr Riddell and the Bishop and the difficulty in which they would have been placed by my withdrawal from the undertaking. But I can assure you that with my feelings on these subjects I would not for 20 times the commission again undergo the misery of working with people who meet the very best exertions with sneers and suspicions. The church at Nottingham, by far the best building I have produced and at nearly double the outlay of the one at Newcastle. The building was commenced and carried through on a mere note of hand, and that in a most glorious manner. Be assured when a man of real Catholic feeling is engaged to erect a church he is bound by far stronger ties than any yet found by legal knowledge.

Because of the problems, the contract had not been formally signed, yet the building was now almost complete. The contract, as presented, contained so many penalty clauses that Myers was reluctant to sign it, as it appeared that, had he done so, he would have ended up with a law suit against him. The gentlemen at Newcastle were very sensitive to changes in the design, anticipating claims for extras, and were

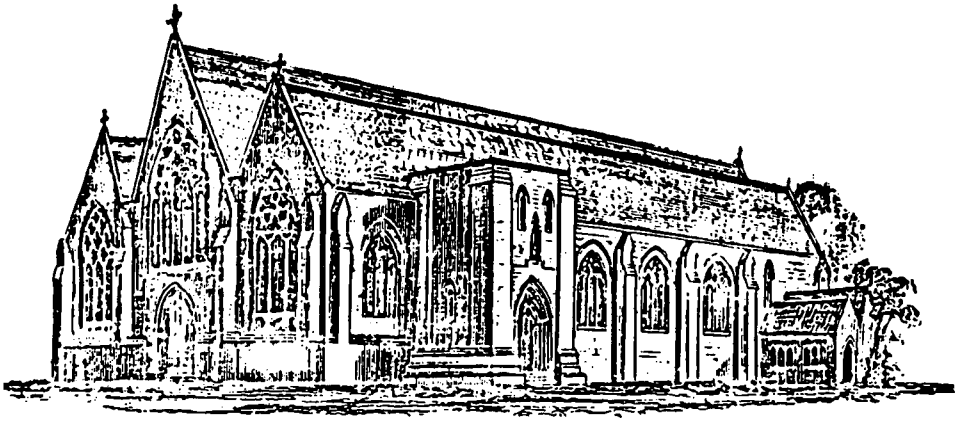
very watchful of the project in every detail. Pugin and Myers, having worked together on several projects, were well used to each other's ways, so much so that if Pugin requested a change it was often incorporated at no extra cost to the contract price. Since one assumes that Myers was never out of pocket, the proposed prices must have included some allowance to cater for any changes of heart by the architect. The Newcastle Committee discovered this arrangement when it was found that the east window was larger than had been planned. Pugin had seen the enlargement as a great improvement and Myers assured the members that this would involve no extra charge. If they had understood this, then they may not have interfered so much, and would probably have produced a contract free of penalty clauses. Pugin expressed great confidence in Myers' ability and high standard of workmanship, and he ended the long letter by asking that the objectionable clauses be removed so that the contract could be signed and all would be well.

Even so, queries still kept being raised. A proposal to place iron railings around part of the site appalled Pugin. In a letter of 14 July, he countered this by proposing a coped wall and gate, the former to be arranged in such a way as to prevent carriages coming too close to the building. He was also firmly of the opinion that persons should only walk through the enclosure surrounding sacred buildings, as the noise generated by carriage traffic would be a great distraction to worshippers. [26]

The last letter from Pugin in the bundle, dated 27 September 1844, contains answers to yet more queries regarding the cost and execution of certain aspects of the building. In general, the Committee were again assured that the cost of the project would be as per contract, and Pugin pointed out that Myers had sustained a loss due to the introduction of stained glass after the specified period, as plain glass had already been cut for the windows. As to the building queries, Pugin stressed that all had been done in accordance with his instructions. [27]

The payment of the final instalment of £180 of Pugin's commission of £370 was made to him on 14 November at Hull. In a copy of a note of this date written by William Dunn, he informed Pugin that the Committee 'have directed payment of' the commission, and requested a statement of his travelling expenses. [28]

The final documents in the bundle are Pugin's handwritten specifications for the work. Materials mentioned include Fullwell lime, Elswick and Westgate stone for the building, the roof to be 'of the best red pine', free from sap or defect, and fastened with wrought iron bolts. The external doors were to be one-and-a-half inch thick oak, and the sacristy window shutters to be of red deal. The tower, sacristy and cloister doors were to be of one-inch oak, while best red deal was again specified for the seats with movable kneeling boards. The sacristy and cloister floors were to have 'hand burnt tiles', as were also the alleys of the nave and aisles. The choir, sanctuary and chapel floors were to have tiles with ornamental patterns, the designs for this work being produced by the 'master of the work'. A space of two feet was to be left below the church and iron air bricks inserted in the lower wall for ventilation. The pulpit and altar were to be worked in Caen stone, with suitable emblems, the drawings for which would again be produced by the master of works. Over the door of the tower there was to be an image of our Blessed Lady; on the west front, St Cuthbert and St Bede; on the buttress of the Blessed Sacrament chapel, an image of our Lord; and over the high altar, St Peter and St Paul. [29]



ST MARY'S CHURCH, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, 1844
An artist's impression

It appears from these letters that the 'canny lads' in Newcastle gave Pugin a hard time and there were moments when he may have had second thoughts about staying with the project. He placed so much reliance on trust when handling an undertaking and assumed that others understood that his own integrity would not allow him to do anything untoward or give less than his very best. In this respect he seems to have found a contractor who understood his ways, and on the evidence of remarks in these letters, other clients apart from the Newcastle gentlemen, gave him a freer hand. The financial constraint which the Committee were obliged to impose on Pugin is probably the main reason why St Mary's is a large but rather plain church, and it is open to speculation as to what he might have produced if he had been given a freer hand.

NOTES

1. For a general description of the building of St Mary's Cathedral, see P. McGuinness, 'St Mary's Cathedral: The Early Years, Part 1' and 'Part 2', in *Northern Catholic History*, No.5, Spring 1977, and No.6, Autumn 1977.

2. Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812–1852), son of Augustus Charles Pugin (1762–1832). For biographical details, see *Dictionary of National Biography*.

3. Letters of Augustus Welby Pugin, 1841–1844, deposited in the Northumberland Record Office, reference NRO.2988/AWP.1–30. The papers include twenty-five letters of Pugin, a draft contract, and two specifications of work, all in Pugin's hand, a letter from Alfred Novello, dated 22 January 1844, to Henry Hemy, Professor of Music, Newcastle upon Tyne, describing and estimating the cost of an organ, and a note by William Dunn re payment of Pugin's commission. The letters are quoted here by kind permission of Thomas A. Bates, Esq.

4. NRO.2988/AWP.1. The letter is clearly dated 1841 but, almost certainly 1841 was written in error for 1842. The collection prefix NRO.2988 is omitted in the following references.

5.	AWP.2	6.	AWP.3	7.	AWP.4	8.	AWP.5
9.	AWP.6	10.	AWP.7	11.	AWP.8	12.	AWP.9
13.	AWP.10.	14.	AWP.11	15.	AWP.12	16.	AWP.30
17.	AWP.13	18.	AWP.14.	19.	AWP.15	20.	AWP.16
21.	AWP.17	22.	AWP.18	23.	AWP.19	24.	AWP.22
25.	AWP.24	26.	AWP.25	27.	AWP.26	28.	AWP.27
29.	AWP.28,29						

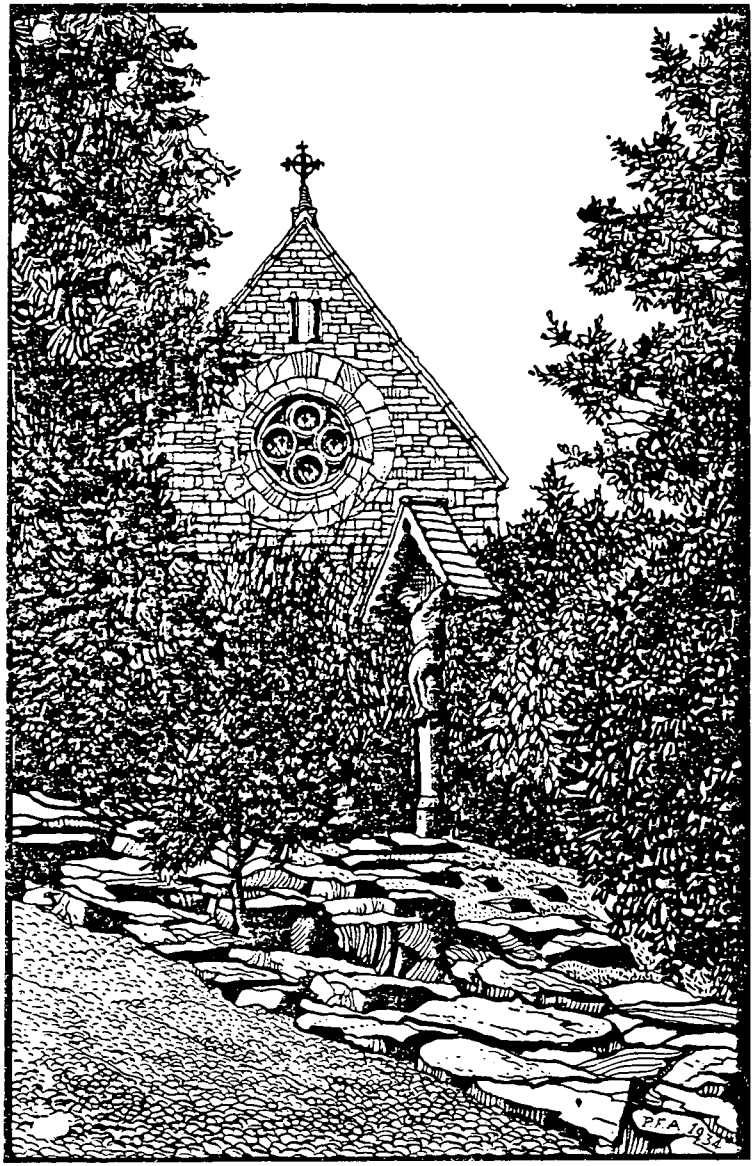
ST MARY'S, WHITTINGHAM, IN 1938

Extract from *The Caravan Pilgrim*, by Peter F. Anson, 1938

It rained hard all the eight miles or so that we covered between Thropton and Whittingham, our next stopping place. We arrived there rather cold and wet, but were soon cheered up by the affectionate welcome given us by that kind old priest, Father Charles Hart, who, despite his white hair, still retains the spirit and vitality of a youthful school-boy. I feel sure he will not object to this comparison — most of his life having been spent in teaching at St Cuthbert's Grammar School, Newcastle, where many of the younger generation of the priests of the Hexham and Newcastle diocese were among his pupils.

He insisted on the caravan being left in the drive in front of his church and took us round his lovely garden, which is also a bird sanctuary, where he has built a Lourdes grotto, likewise a striking Calvary which appears in my sketch. We joined him in saying the Rosary that night in the little Romanesque church which stands in the midst of this peaceful garden. It was erected in 1876 by Sir Henry and Lady Bedingfield, replacing the old chapel at Callaly Castle, the mansion of the Clavering family. Ever since the Reformation this branch of the Clavering's has been among the most stalwart defenders of Catholicism in Northumberland, and it is sad to find that the property has changed hands, and that the Catholic population around here is so reduced in numbers. Many of the fittings and priceless old vestments that belonged to Callaly Castle are now at Whittingham. Few country parishes possess such treasures.

It continued to rain nearly all the way from Whittingham to Wooler, a distance of about twelve miles which we covered during the forenoon. On the left lay the Cheviots; on the right farm land, nearly all under grass, for sheep are the chief concern of the farmers in this part of Northumberland. Wooler is an old market town where the Catholic Religion managed to retain its hold throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, although there was not a permanent chapel in the town before 1843. It was a very humble affair; built over a malt kiln. A mission house was erected in 1843, but destroyed by fire ten years later. The present church, a well-proportioned building in the Early English style of Gothic was opened in 1859.



ST MARY'S, WHITTINGHAM, 1934

REV. WILLIAM JOHN NICHOLSON, 1917–1988

Members were shocked to learn of the sudden death on 4 March of Fr Nicholson, Chairman of the Society since its foundation in 1974. He will be missed very much for many years to come. Tributes to him have already been made and will be made elsewhere in print and everyone will have their own personal memories to treasure. This brief obituary notice is to record, as is fitting, his special interest in Northumbrian and Catholic history, and perhaps also to serve as a reminder, if one were necessary, that Catholics today owe much not only to their forebears who cherished and handed down the Faith but also to those, like Fr Nicholson, who have studied and interpreted the records of the past, and so preserved our Catholic heritage.

Fr Nicholson was born at Gateshead on 6 December 1917, the eldest son of Thomas and Margaret Nicholson. He was educated first at St Cuthbert's Grammar School from 1929 and then from 1934 at Ushaw, where he trained for the priesthood and was ordained on 26 July 1942. He was assistant priest successively at St Augustine's, Darlington (from 1942), West Cornforth (1945), St Mary's, Stockton (1950), Prudhoe (1951), Hexham (1954), Thropton (1955), and St Edward's, Whitley Bay (from 1956). On 29 September 1962 he was appointed to succeed Provost Alfred Chadwick as parish priest of St Mary's, Whittingham (also serving Lemmington Hall Convent), where he remained until his death.

Although Fr Nicholson's pastoral and spiritual work will be recorded elsewhere, it is relevant, even in this brief acknowledgment of his work as a Catholic historian of the North East, to mention that for the last twenty years or so he edited the *Northern Catholic Calendar*, contributing most of the unattributed historical notes and obituaries, and also edited the diocesan *Ordo*. He was an acknowledged expert on the liturgy, serving on both the Diocesan and National Liturgical Commissions. Furthermore, he wrote numerous parish histories and brochures on notable historical events.

An early interest in the history of the Church in the North East, particularly in the Northumbrian Saints and the Celtic Church, broadened during his varied pastoral work in parishes with differing traditions, and deepened when at Whittingham he became a near neighbour of Dr Annie Forster, the expert on recusant history, and a correspondent and collaborator of Fr W. Vincent Smith of Lanchester, whose knowledge extended into the nineteenth century. Fr Nicholson published various articles and those which he wrote specially for the Society's own periodical, *Northern Catholic History* (listed below) show the range of his interests and learning.

Fr Nicholson was one of the founder members of the Society established

in July 1974, and he was its first and only Chairman. He hardly ever missed a committee meeting, a talk or an outing, and only a week before his death he had presided at the Society's February talk, which was appropriately on his favourite subject, St Cuthbert. Each year he gave a chairman's address at the annual general meeting which launched each season.

Fr Nicholson, with Josephine and Mary O'Callaghan, on the Society's outing to Traquair in 1979

Fr Nicholson wore his wide knowledge lightly and no one could ever feel embarrassed to discuss any topic with him, even though it was evident that he knew a great deal about the subject in question. Through Dr Forster and his position at Whittingham he was especially interested in the Benedictine presence in Coquetdale, particularly the Benedictine chaplains of the Selbys of Biddlestone. From 1977 he regularly attended the historical symposium of the English Benedictine Congregation, and one year gave a talk on the Benedictines in Northumberland. On the deaths of Dr Forster and Fr Vincent Smith it was to Fr Nicholson that researchers applied for help and advice, which he gave liberally, and he encouraged many a student of Catholic history.

He was also devoted to the history of Northumberland generally, being Chairman for seven years and then President until his death of the Association of Northumberland Local History Societies, while in his own area he was founder member and Chairman of the River Aln and Breamish Local History Society from 1967 to his death. He was well respected in the County generally for his learning and much loved for his charm and dry humour. He has left a rich legacy of inspiration and example, and the best tribute to him would surely be the practical one of ensuring that his work and that of the Society continue. May he rest in peace.

Articles by Fr W.J. Nicholson in *Northern Catholic History*:

Ralph Peter Clavering, 1727–1787 *(No.1, Spring 1975)*
Catholics in Morpeth in the Eighteenth Century *(No.8, Autumn 1978)*
Nicholas Alain Gilbert, French Emigre Priest, 1762–1821 *(No.12, Autumn 1980)*
Warwick Bridge and Corby Castle *(No.14, Autumn 1981)*
Blessed John Duckett, Priest and Martyr, 1613–1644 *(No.17, Spring 1983)*
Irish Priests in the North East in the Eighteenth Century *(No.19, Spring 1984)*
Irish Priests in the North East in the Nineteenth Century *(No.21, Spring 1985)*
Catholic Tyneside, 1600–1800 *(No.22, Autumn 1985)*
Fasting during Holy Week, 1898 *(No.23, Spring 1986)*
Belgian and Dutch Priests in North East England *(No.24, Autumn 1986)*

PROGRAMME 1988–1989

All lectures will be given in St Mary's Cathedral Centre, Clayton Street West, Newcastle upon Tyne, on Tuesdays, at 7.00 p.m. unless otherwise stated.

4 October 1988	Annual General Meeting, followed by slides and quiz by Peter McGuinness.
26 October 1988 (Wednesday)	Dom Geoffrey Scott OSB, *The Benedictines in the North East during the Nineteenth Century.* (Fr Nicholson Memorial Lecture)
8 November 1988	Rev. R. Connelly, *Blessed Nicholas Postgate: an Historical Appreciation.*
6 December 1988	Michael Morris, *Parish Profiles, Yesterday and Today: a Personal View.*
7 February 1989	T.P. Macdermott, *Irish Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century Tyneside.*
7 March 1989	Professor J.A. Watt, *Anti-Semitism in Medieval England: the Massacre of Jews in York, 1190.*

Coach Excursions

October 1988	Brinkburn Priory (half-day visit)
May 1989	Nunraw Abbey, Scotland
June 1989	Ripley Castle, Yorkshire

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