



# ST PETER'S CHURCH LIVERPOOL

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## CONTENTS

OVERVIEW OF THE ROPEWALKS.....	4-6
OVERVIEW OF SEEL STREET.....	7-8
ORDER OF ST BENEDICT.....	9
ARCHBALD BENEDICT MACDONALD.....	10
ST PETER'S SEEL STREET – THE EARLY YEARS.....	11-13
THE GROWTH OF ST PETER'S.....	13-14
SERVING FATHER'S AND THEIR ASSISTANTS.....	14-16
THE ORGAN.....	16-19
78 SEEL STREET.....	19-20
FR ROBINSON / FR VINCENT GLOVER.....	21
FR PRATT.....	22-23
FR APPLETON.....	23
76 SEEL STREET.....	23-24
THE GREAT FAMINE.....	25-26
FR BONNEY.....	26
THE CRYPT.....	27-29
FR BONNEY (CONT).....	30
WILLIAM AUGUSTINE DAVEY.....	30-31
THE LADY CHAPEL.....	31-32
FR CALDWELL.....	33
FR SCARISBRICK.....	33-34
FR BROWN.....	34-35
FR ANDERSON.....	35-37
FR CORLETT.....	37-38
FR WILSON.....	39
FR GIBBONS.....	40
FR PRIMAVESI.....	40-41

THE GRAND BAZAAR.....	41-42
VIEWS OF ST PETER'S.....	42-43
150 <sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF ST PETER'S .....	44-49
FR BYRNE.....	50
PRIESTS AT ST PETER'S.....	51-52
55 SEEL STREET.....	52-54
THE WAR YEARS.....	55-58
LETTER 1.....	58-59
LETTER 2 .....	59-62
LETTER 3.....	62-63
LETTER 4 .....	63-64
LETTER 5.....	64-66
LETTER 6.....	66
LETTER 7.....	67-68
LETTER 8.....	68-69
LETTER 9.....	69
LETTER 10.....	70
LETTER 11/12.....	71
LETTER 13.....	71-72
THE CHASUBLE.....	72
MOTHER TERESA.....	73
URBAN SPLASH.....	73-78
THE CRYPT.....	79
ALMA DE CUBA.....	80-83

## OVERVIEW OF THE ROPEWALKS



*Ropewalks – Duke Street – (Copyright liverpoolpicturebook.com)*

The name ‘Ropewalks’ goes hand in hand with the Duke Street Conservation Area, which is part of Liverpool’s Merchant’s Quarter. This conservation area was designated in 1988 and has entrusted Liverpool City Council to look after, protect and watch over this part of the city. Its history that has origins from the 18th Century growth of Liverpool associated with the expansion as a trading port and the starting of the industrial revolution.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the first ‘Old Dock’ had been reclaimed and the city’s growth had expanded elsewhere. Resulting in the fact that Liverpool’s heritage and history will always move from central positions, here, the area of Ropewalks is a historical area that needs to be promoted far more than it is to provide a greater in-depth history on an area that is ever changing.

The Ropewalks area today contain a mixture of late 18th and early 19th century merchants’ houses, counting houses and warehouses. However, the area also has later 19th century and early 20th century commercial and new building developments. It is an ever-changing area.

The history of the ropewalk buildings groups many outstanding areas of interest, from the Bombed-Out Church, to St Peter’s Church Seel Street, to a fantastic nightlife, a historical China-town and ever-changing buildings within the area.

Rewind back to the start of the 18th Century in Liverpool and the City was growing as an important commercial port. The City and Liverpool Bay became the place to trade for the navigational routes to settlements in North America. The ‘old dock’, the world’s first commercial ‘wet dock’ was established in 1715 on the basis that there was discontent from ship owners that there was nowhere safe to dock ships that arrived in Liverpool to trade their valuable cargoes.

The Old Dock was built at a cost of £11,000 and opened on 31 August 1715. The dock accommodated up to 100 ships. Originally a tidal basin was accessed directly from the river, and from 1737 access was via Canning Dock. The dock was built with one graving dock; a second and third graving dock were added in 1746 and the 1750s. The dock walls were constructed from brick laid directly on to sandstone bedrock. The dock gates would have allowed as much as 10% of the water out between high tides, resulting in a water level drop of several feet. This may have been offset by water entering the dock from a stream.

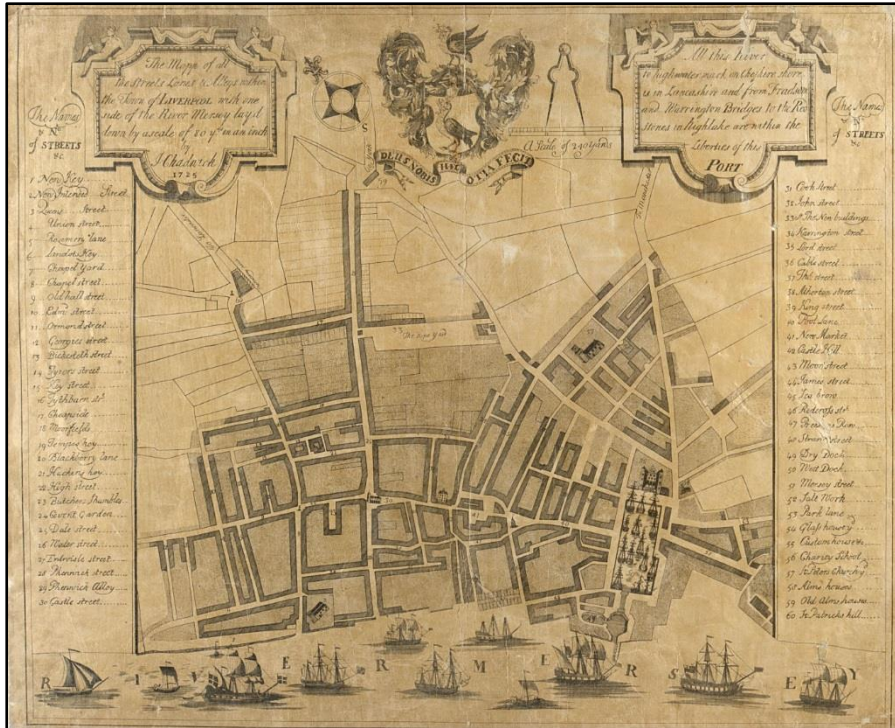
Although Liverpool vessels were involved in the slave trade before the dock opened, it would have served ships involved in the Africa-America trade, propelling Liverpool to world leader of this trade. The dock led to Liverpool’s establishment as the leading European port and subsequent world trading port.

The historical Seel Street can be traced back to its birth of 1790 and is part of the historical Ropewalks area within Liverpool City Centre. The Ropewalks area is situated within the Riverside Ward of Liverpool, slightly to the south of the main city centre. The land rises from the Liverpool 1 complex at Hanover Street up towards Berry Street and towards Liverpool’s China Town.

These are roads that have taken their history and form, from the ‘roperies’ that were founded to service the shipping industry following the building of the world’s first commercial ‘Wet Dock’, which was designed by Thomas Steers on land that was reclaimed from the former ‘Pool’ in 1715.



The Duke Street and Bold Street area developed during the 18th Century as local industry began to spring up in the area. Many of these included, ship building, iron works, breweries, and of course ropemaking. Hence the name 'Ropewalks' takes its name due to the prevalence of 'roperies' that were established within the area to service the shipping companies of the 18th Century after the construction of the 'safe' Old Dock. The sites of the roperies that were then established on the fields have governed the pattern of roads that exist to this day.



Sourced from J. Sharples; Liverpool – Pevsner Architectural Guides, Yale University Press and J. Stonehouse – The Streets of Liverpool:

*“The work required a straight, narrow stretch of ground, somewhat longer than the rope to be made. – the roperies that occupied the site of Bold Street were over 300 yards (274 metres) long.”*

Roperies in and around the area were to be found on the sites of Bold Street, Renshaw Street, Ranelagh Street, Duke Street, Parr Street & Berry Street (formerly Colquitt Street).

(The street names have derived from connections to important and influential landowners, tenants and merchants in the area on whose land the roperies, cooperages, timber yards and foundries operated). “The Ropers were great men in election times and placed a high value on their votes”. Above - *A map of Liverpool 1725* – (Copyright liverpool1207.blogwordpress.com)

74 Seel Street – Recorded as 1860’s John Simpson’s Veterinary Surgeon (Copyright Wiki)

The ropewalks area lay within a large area owned by the corporation and was leased to numerous tenants. There seemed to be no major overall plan for the development of the area and the street grid was laid out in a speculative manner. The only regulations by the corporation being on the height and elevations of the buildings themselves.



Between the main streets, the area was developed as and when needed, so that by about 1785, all the connecting streets had emerged. The larger streets show the former residential streets which the trade would take place and behind them would be the narrower streets of warehouses and poorer people’s houses.

In the 19th Century, while trade in Liverpool was at its peak, obviously aided by the railway on our doorstep, the area now known as the ‘ropewalks’ fell from grace.

The railways helped itself to the wealthier classes, often earning a living from the Docks in Liverpool but no longer had to live in the city centre and could move out to more affluent area's such as Mossley Hill.

The railways were also able to move their produce away quickly and increased the good fortune of the city. At the start of the 1800's, a modern network of streets and roads had appeared, and smaller squares and areas had sprung up and were becoming more established.

These grand houses built for merchants and counting houses were almost back to back with more modest terrace housing and many buildings in the area reflected the dual residency and business need. Probably the most famous example being that of the Grade 2 listed Thomas Parr's House on Colquitt Street.

While the upper classes of the city that once lived in the ropewalks area were now moving out of the city, the city did not stand still. Bold Street began to take shape as 'the' place to shop and the ground floor of many old houses were converted for such use. Poor people were still confined to several courts with back to back housing, and the Duke Street/Bold Street area at this time experienced a population explosion with an influx of Irish people seeking fortune in the city

The ropewalks area lay within a large area owned by the corporation and was leased to numerous tenants. There seemed to be no major overall plan for the development of the area and the street grid was laid out in a speculative manner. The only regulations by the corporation being on the height and elevations of the buildings themselves but generally of uniform style that one could easily date the appearance of the building.

The picture below shows Duke Street in the 1950's, showing the general height of the grand houses. Between the main streets, the area was developed as and when needed, so that by about 1785, all the connecting streets had emerged.

The larger streets show the former residential streets which the trade would take place and behind them would be the narrower streets of warehouses and poorer people's houses.



*Duke Street in the 1950's –  
(Copyright cowen-ent.co.uk)*

Moving forward to the 20th Century, the area saw a physical decline.

The effects from the bombing in World War 2 caused great destruction, especially in the Wolstenholme Square area. But its greatest impact was the moving away of the maritime activity from the area.

This resulted in a decline of the condition of the buildings and warehouses and as recently seen on Duke Street. Original warehouses demolished to be replaced by lesser quality developments. The ropewalks area will never serve its original purpose again.

The original ropewalks would be totally unrecognisable today, the businesses completely different and the whole area regenerated. There are only a few original warehouses left to bear testament to its original layout of the roads and the dusty names on billboards.

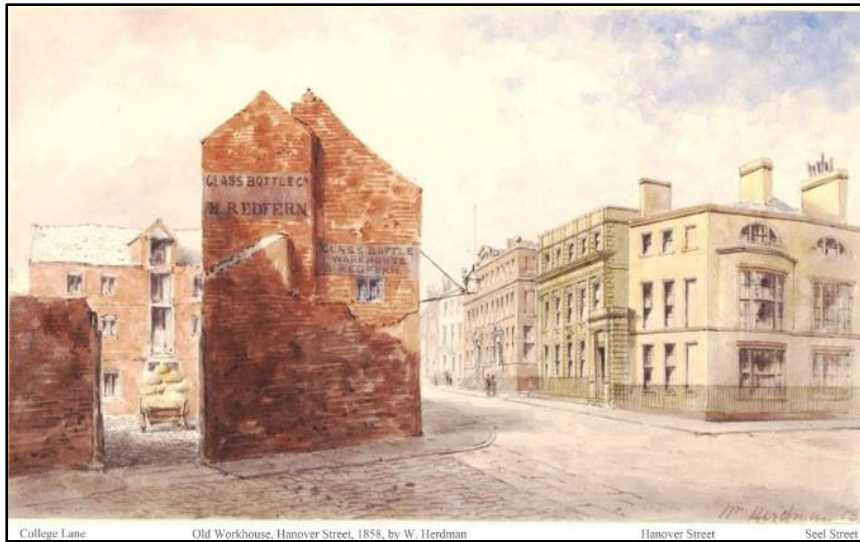


## OVERVIEW OF SEEL STREET



Thomas Seel the Elder gave his name to the thoroughfare which runs up from Hanover Street. It was laid out in 1790. Seel Street and Slater Street retain significant portions of original Georgian terraces built when the area was first laid out. Slater Street is the most complete, its north-western side being largely intact.

The street runs from Berry Street, crosses Colquitt Street, Back Colquitt Street, Slater Street, Concert Square, David Lewis Street and finally to Hanover Street. Seel was also a slave trader and was one who directly combined slaves directly with trade in Tobacco. He started sending out shipments of European goods in 1725. He dispatched one ship every year between 1729 and 1747. From 1736 to 1744 Seel combined tobacco trading with slaves. During these years his vessels went first to the Gambia to buy slaves, proceeded to the Rappahannock where they delivered just over 100 captives and the loaded tobacco for the return voyage to Liverpool. *Image copyright Wikipedia.com*



*The second building on the right was original Thomas Seel's House in 1765. - (Copyright Twitter)*

Seel Street has always had an interesting past. Back in the 17th Century when the ropewalks were expanding in the ropewalks area, the geography of Seel Street gradually became incorporated into the ropewalks area. Many businessmen and Merchants lived on Seel Street. There were Counting Houses that served the local traders, and warehouses that stored their goods.

To the east of Hanover Street, this was once all fields and Seel street would only take its name from Thomas Seel, who commissioned the architect Thomas Steers to build him a house on Hanover Street, cornering what is now Seel Street.

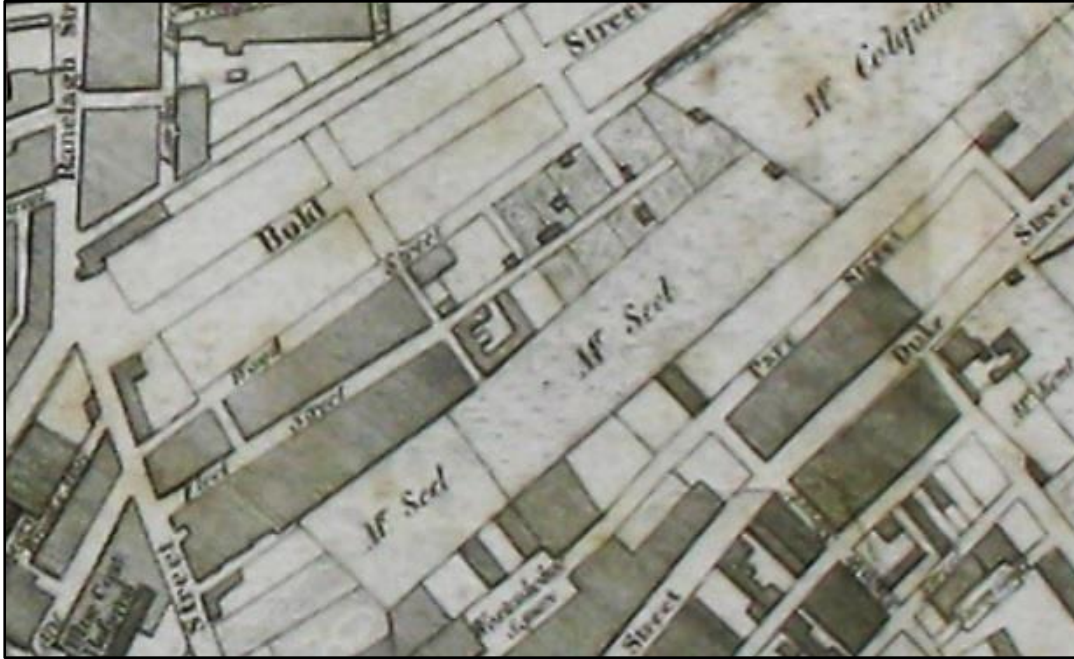
While the names from the past have disappeared into the history books, the street names continue to live on in Liverpool as a testament to the past and its heritage.

The heritage of the people who lived and traded from the area may have all but gone in name, but the area was shaped by the early traders and some of the grand houses from the era still survive to this day.

And yet one building has stood out on Seel Street since the late 1700's. While other warehouses have come and gone, St Peter's has not moved location.

*Seel Street showing the RC Church circa 1900 – (Copyright maps.nls.uk)*





One of the early maps of Liverpool is the 1785, 'A plan of the Town & Township of Liverpool, from an actual survey taken in the year 1785 by Eyes'.

It shows the layout of the empty parcels of land owned by Mr Seel.

*Copyright - bryarsandbryars.co.uk*

The 1785 map is interesting as it shows the birth of the area. The parcels of land correspond to the road names of today. Mr Seel – Seel Street, Mr (Jonas) Bold - Bold Street. Mr Hardman – Hardman Street. Mr Colquitt – Colquitt Street. For the corresponding streets, Bold Street is named after Jonas Bold, who leased land from the Corporation on which St Luke's Church and a ropery owned by James and Jonathon Brookes were built.

Bold Street was originally laid out as a ropewalk; a long thin area of land used in the manufacture of rope (the area is now known as 'Rope Walks'). They used to measure the rope from the top of Bold Street to the bottom because it was the standard length needed for sailing ships. It was laid out for residences around 1780 and named after Jonas Bold, a noted slave merchant, sugar trader and banker. In 1802 Bold became Mayor of Liverpool. It was also known as "the Bond Street of the North."

Hannover Street was the first to be built, followed by Duke Street, Bold Street and following on from these was Seel Street. Originally the goods brought into the Dock were stored in the merchants houses, but as trade grew, they proved to be inadequate, and private warehouses were constructed adjacent to the houses.

Due to the huge demand for plots in this area, the new industrial and warehouse buildings took the form of deep plans front to rear, with narrow street frontages and they were extended in height to three or four stories with a basement. The housing consisted of a range of buildings from grand Georgian town houses such as the Parr residence on Colquitt Street, to terraces as seen at 15-25 Duke Street.

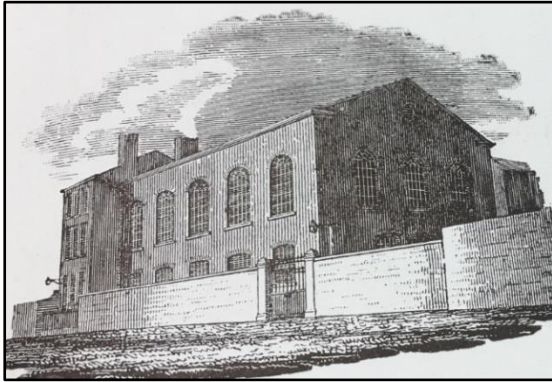
Some of these were arranged around squares or gardens, such as Wolstenholme Square and Cleveland Square, and a Ladies Walk was provided along Duke Street. As the warehousing and industrial uses of the area grew, the merchants moved to more salubrious suburbs that were being developed higher up the hill in the Canning Street area and more distant areas such as Mossley Hill. Some of the former residential properties were adapted to other uses, with ground floors converted to shops as the retail importance of the area grew.

As part of this process, the area also saw an increase in the number of labourers attracted to the port and its trades, and the accommodation for this group was provided in much poorer back-to-back housing such as Dukes Terrace and housing courts. Within the Duke Street area, a number of key buildings remain that help to define its History and character.

The area has seen major growth in its time, yet still keeps its heritage in the smaller narrow streets. Some of the warehouses are still original in their facade yet their trade is different. It is testament that the area around St Peter's church as changed, and while the building of St Peter's has changed itself, it has survived two world wars, the social change and still is one of the most original buildings in the immediate area.



## ST PETER'S CHURCH – THE BEGINNINGS



*St Peter's Seel Street – Copyright Liverpool Record Office*

St Peter's Church, Seel Street was constructed in 1788. In a mostly rural area, this building has served its parish up until its closure in 1993 when the church was deconsecrated.

The building has gone through massive change in its time, from that of a small rectangular rural building to the extension in to the Priest's House next door to enlarge the building.

There were important graves found in the Crypt and while the building is now a Restaurant/Bar, it is fortunate to have most of its fixtures and fittings still complete and in situ. The history is most fascinating and starts with the Order of St Benedict.

### Order of Saint Benedict

The Order of Saint Benedict as they are officially known, or the Benedictines are a monastic Catholic religious order of Monks. They follow the strict Rule of St Benedict and because of their robes, they are sometimes known as the Black Monks.

Although being called an 'Order', they do not operate under a single hierarchy and generally their order is represented by the Benedictine Confederation. This is an organisation that was set up in 1893 to represent the Order's shared interests. *Image Copyright Wikipedia.com*



The history of the Order can be traced back to the Monastery at Subiaco in Italy circa 529AD. Their orders took on the monastic life of what was required at the time and the conditions and by the 9<sup>th</sup> century the Benedictine had become standardised through Western Europe. In circa 597AD, Augustine of Canterbury and his monks established the first English Benedictine monastery at Canterbury, and this soon spread throughout the UK at a rate.

In Liverpool the Benedict's could easily be traced to Childwall. Childwall's history goes back to very early days. Domesday book records that there was one priest there, holding one carucate of land (about 50 acres). This, however, was not for his own use but for the poor of the parish, extending to the Mersey from Garston to past Hale.

In 1094 Count Roger Poges of Poitou granted the patronage of Kydewell to the Abbey of St Martin at Sees in Normandy. Childwall then became attached to the Priory of Lancaster which Roger founded as the cell of the Abbey. Patronage passed to the Grelleys, Barons of Manchester, during the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, and a member of that family Herbert Grelley was Rector in 1260. Nearly 50 years later in 1309, Sir Roger de Holland presented Childwall to the college of Secular Cannons at Upholland.

The gift was not appreciated, for the Seculars discovered that Childwall was a wilderness more suitable for contemplative monks and they gave the place to the Benedictines. The Benedictines kept Childwall until the dissolution of the monasteries when it came under the jurisdiction of the See of Chester.

The Dissolution of the monasteries took place in the English Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. This was when the Church of England broke away from the authority of the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church in general. Between 1536 and 1541, Henry VIII attempted to disband Monasteries and disposed of their assets.

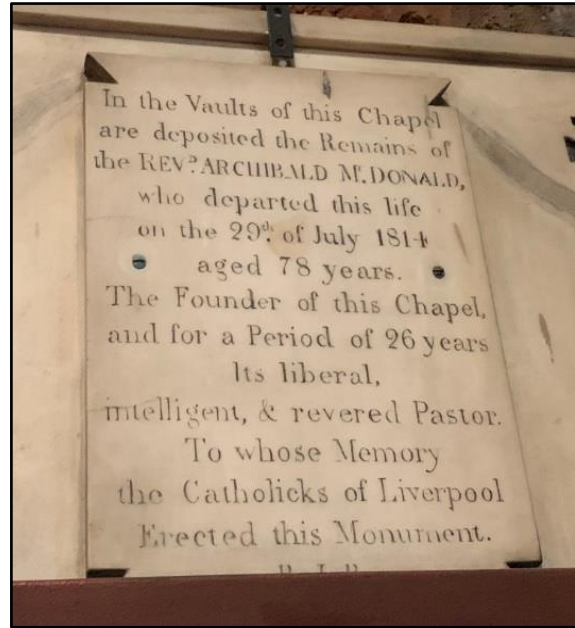
Although this only occurred for 5 years, it brought mass destruction to many buildings and many original artifacts were lost at this time, as well as much history on the buildings, as well as Monks who either fled or were killed in the process. There are many hundreds of abandoned buildings in the UK that show the past history of these desicated monasteries.

## Archibald (Benedict) MacDonald

Archibald (Benedict) MacDonald was born in 1739 (or 1741) at Knoydart, Lochaber, Scotland. He was both to Father, Donald MacDonald, and mother, Mary Cameron.

He entered Monastic life on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1756 and Professed on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 1757. He is noted for his Missions at the following locations: Houghton Yorks - 1766-1770, Standish Hall Lancs – 1770-1773, Liverpool - 1783-1788, Seel Street Liverpool – 1788-1814.

He also held Offices at Praepositus of Lancs 1781-1785 and then Cathedral priorship of Rochester 1810-1814. Notes on Archibald state that his Father was a Jacobite. Archibald was schooled at St Gregory's and when he came to Liverpool, he was at Edmond Street Chapel (1783-1788) and then progressed to the newly built St Peter's Seel Street from 1788-1814. *Image copyright Jonathon Wild.*



MacDonald had great influence in Liverpool when he arrived. St Mary's Del Quay was a small chapel first mentioned in records from 1257. It was built as a Chapel of ease for the main Parish Church in Walton (so for those who wanted to worship in the Parish but couldn't get to the main Church, they could worship in a smaller local Chapel.) However, by 1773, there was difficulty in understanding the management of the missions of the Chapel and this came to a head with the only solution being to hand the chapel over to the Benedictines.

The first to benefit from this handing over was none other than Benedict MacDonald. He had entered regular clerical duty in the town and it could not be timed better.

Why was St Peter's in Seel Street constructed? It was constructed simply because of the increase in the number of Catholics in Liverpool and this led to the construction of St Peter's. He was reluctant to open this church simply because it was out of town and surrounded by fields at the time.

MacDonald continued to take office here from 1788 to his death in 1814. He died on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 1814 in the 78<sup>th</sup> year of his life. A grand age at the time. He was interred in to the Vaults of the Chapel of St Peter's and laid there until a strange occurrence later in the history of the Church. In 2003, St Peter's Church (that had been deconsecrated in 1993) was being converted to high-specification offices by a Developer in Liverpool when workers came across 22 bodies in the Crypt of St Peter's Seel Street while excavating the crypt area.

Amongst the reports stated that the body of Fr Bede Brewer (one of the founding members of Ampleforth College) was discovered. This was also along with monks James Calderbank, Denis Allerton, Benedict Glover, Francis Fairclough, Gregory Robinson and Joseph Glover.

Sadly it was stated that as the founder of St Peter's Church, Archibald Benedict MacDonald, had been buried first and that his coffin wasn't clearly labelled, it was not possible to identify the remains of MacDonald in the time allowed. While other Monks had been given a special burial at Ampleforth Abbey, the remains of 14 lay people together with the supposed remains of MacDonald were buried in Ford Cemetery.

There appears to be no inscription at Ford Cemetery for this historical person. Indeed there appears to have been no formal service for the internment and no burial honour for someone who served Liverpool so well. Only the tablet at St Peter's Seel Street confirms that he was once buried in the Crypt at the Church.

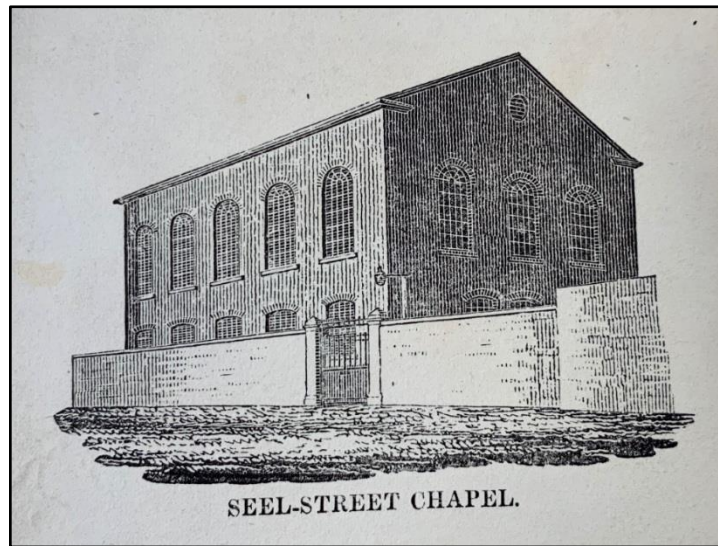
Perhaps one day the body could be properly identified and buried alongside the tablet in a more fitting location closer to his serving of his past Chapels.

## St Peter's Seel Street – The Early Years

St Peter's Church on Seel Street was opened on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 1788 by the Revd A. B. MacDonal of the order of St Benedict.

The Liverpool Advertiser reported that, *'On Sunday last, a new Roman Catholic Chapel in Seel Street, was opened with High Mass, and a sermon by the Reverend Mr Macdonald.* It was to be a new beginning in the newly constructed Seel Street and would serve Revd MacDonal for the next 25 years until his death and internment into the Church Vaults.

Earliest known drawing of St Peter's – 1811 – *Copyright Liverpool Record Office.*



In 1700, Liverpool consisted of only 1,100 houses, and 5,700 inhabitants and yet by 1790, there were 8,500 houses and 55,000 people living in the city. Again the shipping trade in 1700 was 84 ships and by the late 1700's there were 4,200. Trade was brisk but not without its issues. It was named as the triangular trade, cheap wares to West Africa, exchanged there for slaves, the slaves were taken to the West Indies and then sold for tobacco and rum. At each stage of the exchange, there was profit to be made.

Father Macdonald, knew where he wanted the Church to go. While it puzzled many of people (even this day), his foresight was plain to see. Hanover Street was ceasing to be a section of the outer ring; Bold Street (named after Jonas Bold) was already in existence and there were already a few houses built. Thomas Seel who owned a good portion of land (as stated above), had, at the time, sold his gardens. They stretched up as far as Mr Colquitt's field. The corporation recorded a special resolution on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Feb 1786. *"Ordered that a Special Committee be appointed for the purpose of surveying Bold Street, and several cross streets that lead in to it, as they are at present laid down in the plan on the lease lately granted by Jonas Bold, and what alterations could be made for the cross streets so as to form a direct communication from Bold Street through Mr Thomas Seel's field to Suffolk Street"*.

Father MacDonal must have had some influence with the Corporation, or indeed he got them on a good day as six months after the Church was opened, a note was found to state that: *"At a common Council held on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1789, it was ordered that a new Lease to be granted to the Rev Macdonald of the Roman Catholic Chapel lately erected by him and situate in Seel Street for three lives of his own nomination and for 21 years afterwards under the reserved yearly ground rent of twelvecence per yard for the front."*

A town plan of 1796 (8 years after the construction of the Chapel), shows the R.C Chapel standing in isolation at the end of Seel Street which ends abruptly just beyond the Chapel at the edge of Mr Colquitt's field.

The Chapel that was 'too far out of town' is no further out of town than Renshaw Street Chapel and the original grievance was from a Captain Nat from Crooked Lane, however no Captain Nat ever resided from Crooked Lane. The Church was in the right place for the blossoming streets and was no more out of town than any other local Church.

Records do not indicate who actually constructed the property, or of its Architect but it is mainly credited to Revd A. B. MacDonal as his name is attached to the reasoning behind the building of the Church. The original layout of the building was very uniform and the following documentation is taken from English Heritage (*Copyright*) – *"Catholic church. 1788, the sanctuary added 1845. Stucco. 2 storeys and 6 bays. Ground floor has segmental headed windows, gallery has round-headed windows, all with leaded glazing. Projecting vestry to 1st bay. A projecting 2 storeyed porch with pediment, fluted Doric columns, frieze and cornice, and date of 1788 in metopes; window in upper storey. Interior has gallery on 3 sides, on columns with leaf capitals. Flat ceiling. Mural monument to founder who died 1814 (a draped urn). Sanctuary is more ornate, with gilded Composite*



*pilasters, and altar with columns and pediment, modillioned cornice, segmental arched ceiling. Relief mural monuments of 1837, 1840 and 1847. Sanctuary said to project into No. 76. Oldest Roman Catholic church in Liverpool.”*

The layout of the Church served the population at the time. There would have been no grand Altar, entrance chamber or external staircase. The main door to the church is presumed to be at the rear of the Church as per the standard layout of many churches. The image above does not show the extension from the current porch or staircase. The building had not yet extended in to the Presbytery and it is presumed that there is no Lady Chapel at this point because of the restrictions of the space behind the Church building. The Church was surrounded by a large wall and access to the Church and garden was via the large iron gate in the wall. The building would have stood more or less in its own area until the rest of the street was built up but still the property was out of town and would have been a fair walk if parishioners had once served at St Mary's Del Quay.

Would the Church have been full for the first service? There would have been a great possibility seeing as this was the newest Church in the area. It is interesting that there appears to have been no gallery when the Church was built, the top windows simply letting in light. This is shown by the lack of external porch area which currently houses the staircase to access the upper floors. Did the Church plan for a small congregation at the start and quickly realise that their needs required a gallery and further seating? Was the Church built in this way to gauge how popular it would be? It was fortunate that they built the upper story when the building was first constructed and this has served for two additional floors up to the present day.

In any case, there were a large amount of windows across all sides of the building. 5 at the side, 3 at the rear (both upper and lower floor) and this would have flooded light in to the building. This was built simply because there was no electricity at the time and the building relied heavily on natural light. There would have only been natural light, and candle light so it is to assume that the Church went through many candles per day!

This building would see massive change in the first 100 years and yet the building has survived to the present day, still showing the original footprint, yet the building is easy to understand the changes over the years as a serving church and beyond.



*Interior of the Church – Copyright Liverpool Record Office*

On the 21<sup>st</sup> September 1788, the first baptism was performed at the Church. The first entry to the Church records was recorded as “Was baptised Mary, daughter of John and Mary Goosse; Sponsors, Paul Hewit and Margaret Yates.” The Goosse is an unusual surname and not easily recognised in local records. The History Directory and Gazetteer of 1824 shows the nearest spelling of John Goose who was an agent to carriers, 6 Duke's Dock. Is this the same John as the father of the baptised and there is just a difference in spelling for the Church Records?



Proving that the Church was popular showed fifteen more baptisms by Dec 31<sup>st</sup>. The following year in 1789 this figure reached to 60 and by 1800, there were 120 baptisms per year.

The picture above shows the rear of the Church in 1926. It shows the statues, the rear door and the Font area. Yet if the extension of the porch took place before this time, was the side entrance only used as an additional door and access for the staircase? History does not record this. However, the rear of the church would have been the main focal point before the extension of the Altar. On the first of April 1789, 7 months after the opening of the Church, there was a lease granted by the City Corporation which read, *“To Father MacDonald and successors, of the site of St Peter’s Chapel, so long as a place of worship”*. There was a separate lease granted for the house and schools, with the annual ground rent at twelve pence.

## The Growth of St Peter’s Parish.

Rapid growth took place of the church not only from the baptisms, but also the confirmations. In 1813 alone, 571 were confirmed by Father MacDonald. The building at this time would have reached capacity and it would have been necessary for a rethink on the layout of the property. Originally the entrance was at the rear of the Church, passing the font on the way in to the church, but with the Church having an upper section (but with no floor), the building was, as previously mentioned, built ahead of its time. It afforded a new layout of the property and would have been the start the enlargement of the property, not just upwards but also outwards with the erection of a new Porch area, stairs and landing to the upper floor, and the new gallery.

The interior of the layout was transformed. The gallery section on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor would have provided additional seating, and the organ would have found its correct place from that ‘over the Altar’ to the rear of the church in its own section on the gallery. The extension of the building proves that the Church was flourishing, and that the upper story was being used for the good of the Church. Dotted around the building are shadows of the past and the layout of the building is very much different to that of the original design.



Seen on the left is one of the original window archways that was partly bricked up and the lower half of the wall removed for the new doorway entrance into the church from that of the Porch vestibule.

The layout of the church would have been transformed, with additional access points from this area, a new entrance chamber and access to the staircase and upper floor.

While it was disappointing to have lost a stained-glass window, the building was greater for an additional entrance. The building would go on to be bombed in World War 2 losing much of its original stained-glass and history does not record where this stained-glass window went.

*Image copyright Jonathon Wild.*

Why was the Church extended so greatly only 20 or so years since it opened. We must look at the growth of the Parish of St Peter’s for the answers. However, one must be careful on who to take the guidance from.

Historian’s from the past have been both kind and not so kind to Liverpool’s past. If we are to take the words from Professor Ramsay Muir then he describes the streets as dirty, long and depressing, not seeing a well dressed person on his travels and that where great wealth had arrived in parts of the city, it was only for the chosen few. The warehouses in the town that had stopped plying their trade where to become homes for many people in the one area, and even cellar systems that were owned by the gentry would be let out by poor people looking for somewhere to live.

The reflection of the poor people of the area is stark when a survey in 1790 discovered that there were a total of over 8000 inhabited houses of which over 1,700 had inhabited cellars.

A further survey of the businesses in the area observed that every seventh house in the vicinity was open for the sale of liquor. It meant that for ever 4 people (on average) sharing a cellar system, they were virtually within spitting distance of a public house. While Freddie O Connor's 'A pub on every corner' book that was written about Scotland Road in the 1980's, this set up of trade would have made Scotland Road look empty!

There was mass poverty in the area, crime was rife and there was no real answer until 1811 when the Town Council reorganised the Police, reorganised the layout of the City and created seven districts – each having three constables for each district.

A more attractive review of Liverpool is taken from an edition of the Liverpool Guide and describes the area of 'the view of Castle Street presents a view not to be excelled in perhaps the Capital' For some historians, Liverpool was easily written about, yet some where more romantic than others.

A further review of the area around St Peter's at the time provides interesting. The Gore's General Advisor in 1803 paint a good picture on the area. It talks of the newly opened Lyceum in Bold Street, and the up and coming area. The Theatre Royal is open for play's and even the Mayor, Jonas Bold (Bold Street is named after him) opens up licencing meetings in the town to stop the spread of illegal inns and public houses.

Properties in the Parish come up for sale. No 81 and 82 Pitt Street and also two houses at the corner of Hurst and Garden streets. (This is now the site of the entrance to the King's Dock).

As a final cheerful extract from the historical notes, a H. Forshaw of the Globe Tavern, John Street, provides Turtle Soup daily from 12pm till 2pm and has "*a few fine Turtle in Pots to carry to any part of the Kingdom*".

## Serving Father's and Assistants

When Archibald Macdonald took up his position at St Peter's, he had assistance to help him during his role as any church or chapel would expect. These were Frs Rich. Pope, John Lawrence Barnes, Wm Jerome Digby and Jas. Calderbank.

- **Fr Rich Pope** was born 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1760 and professed in 1782. His missionary work took him to St Peter's in 1789, Lawkland in 1790, Lytham (undated) and finally Netherton 1804. He passed away on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 1828 in Netherton and is buried just outside the south aisle of Sefton Church.
- **John Lawrence Barnes** was born on the 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1748. It does not state where John was born but he professed in 1769. His Missions were St Peter's Liverpool in 1790 and Bonham (undated). He died on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 1803.
- **William Jerome Digby** (birth date unknown) was Clothed on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 1759 and Professed on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 1761. His Missions were varied and took him to: Etal 1783, St Mary's Liverpool 1784, Bath 1785, London 1794, St Mary's Liverpool 1794, St Peter's Liverpool 1796-1808, Warrington 1808-16, Saltwell 1816-22. He died on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 1825 at Downside.
- **James Calderbank** was born on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1770. He Professed in 1793 and was Ordained on the 21<sup>st</sup> December 1793. His missions were: Acton Burnell (undated), Birkenhead (undated), Parbold (Undated), Vernon Hall (Undated), Bath 1800, Weston 1805, London 1806, St Peter's Liverpool 1808, Bath 1809, Crosby 1817, Woolton 1819. He died on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1821 and was buried at St Peter's Seel Street and reburied at Ampleforth on July 2004.

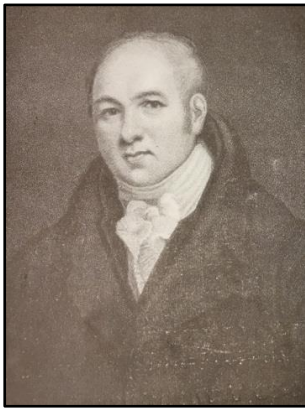
On the 29<sup>th</sup> July 1814, Archibald Benedict MacDonald passed away. History does not give the cause but it was likely that it was simply old age. He lived till he was 78, a ripe old age for that period of history and was interred in St Peter's Vaults. We will look to visit the Vaults at a later stage in this document but his final resting place is far removed from the grand crypt at St Peter's, and Fr Macdonald now lies in an unmarked grave in Ford Cemetery, Litherland. Should the 'creator' of St Peter's be reinterred in to a greater place or even buried back at St Peter's Seel Street?

For such a dignified person as Father Macdonald, history does not record much personal details. He wrote three volumes of sermons and a prayer book.

A note or two must not be forgotten about the Founder for St Peter's, Father MacDonald. The Liverpool Mercury reported that (on the 5<sup>th</sup> August 1814 - Deaths):

*“On Friday last at Woolton, the Rev Archibald MacDonal, aged 78 years, many years the respected Roman Catholic Pastor of Seel Street in this town. A solemn service was performed with the Altar pulpit and front seats hung with black cloth. The dead March in ‘Saul’ preceded the Requiem which with the Dies Irae and the Sanctus and other parts of the Ritual were performed under the direction of Mr Molineux. The officiating clergymen walked in procession to the bottom of the Chapel, when the burial service was read by Rev Thomas Fisher, and the body was committed to the grave.*

### William Dunstan Tarleton



His successor was William Dunstan Tarleton who was born in 1772 in Lancashire. He was clothed in 1791 and Professed on the 17<sup>th</sup> Aug 1794. His Missions were at St Mary's Liverpool 1802, St Peter's Liverpool from 1814-1816. *Image copyright Liverpool Record Office.*

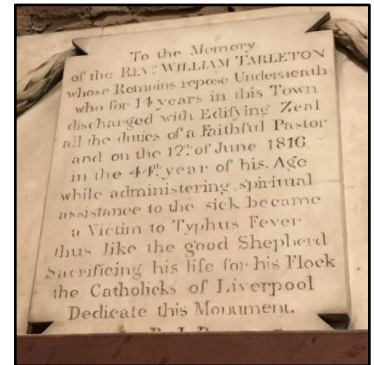
Tarleton was one of the exiled from Dieuleward and made his 'profession' at Action Burnell. While the wandering community made Ampleforth their home, he was sent to St Mary's Liverpool. Only four years later, he was contacted to become the Prior of Ampleforth, but he flatly refused the position.

However, his tenure at St Peter's was short lived as he passed away on the 12<sup>th</sup> June 1816 at Liverpool from Typhus at only age 44. He was probably buried at Seel Street but he was not one of those moved to Ampleforth in 2004.

His assistants were:

**Henry Leo Spain.** He was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb 1790 and Professed in 1808. His Missions were at St Peter's in Liverpool in 1818 and Birtley 1815. He died on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1850 aged 60 at Lommelet, Lille.

**Thomas Gregory Robinson.** He was born on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 1780 and Professed in 1804. His Missions were at St Peter's Liverpool 1815, Provincial of York 1822. He died on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1837 at Liverpool and was interred at St Peter's Seel Street only to be reburied at Ampleforth in July 2004.



Noted that during his brief Rectorship at St Peter's Seel Street, the Register of Burials in St Peter's vaults began in Feb 1816. *Above right – copyright Jonathon Wild.*

### Thomas Gregory Robinson

After the death of Tarleton, Fr. Thomas Gregory Robinson served the parish for the longest role as Rector. Thomas Gregory Robinson was born on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 1780. He Professed in 1804 and served his Missions at St Peter's Seel Street from 1816 and also the Provincial of York from 1822. He died on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1837 in Liverpool and was interred at Seel Street, being reburied at Ampleforth in July 2004. His assistant was:

- **Fr Vincent Glover.** He was born on the 11<sup>th</sup> Feb 1791 and Professed in 1804. His Missions were at Knaresborough in 1815, St Peter's 1816 and Brownedge in 1838. He died at Brownage on the 6<sup>th</sup> August 1840. Fr Vincent Glover would go on to serve St Peter's for 22 years as the Pastor of the Congregation.

Robinson was born in Bath and before being enlisted in to the Church, he was a surgeon in the Navy. It was noted that he 'Possessed of no ordinary abilities' and enlisted in the Priory in 1813. The three years he served brought him up to speed and he resigned from the Priory to come to St Peter's in 1816. For those that didn't know him personally, he could be considered to be a person who was not easily approached. Some considered



him a cold fronted person, yet in truth, when one actually befriended him, they would find the complete opposite. He would be cheerful in his nature. Surprising that he was a Father as it was said that he listened more than he spoke. However, he must have done something right at the Church for his long tenure was testament to those that chose to worship at the Church and befriend him in his own right.

He was instrumental in making use of the space in the Church and considered the use of the building limiting to his services, so much that in 1810, the addition of the porch and gallery took place.

When the church was constructed in 1788, it was a fairly simple layout. Pews on the ground floor, altar against the original wall before the extension, and natural light and candle light to light the church in the evenings. There was no gallery in the 1788 construction and therefore there would have been no real place to house an organ with manual blowers. There may have been a manual organ in the church during construction but history does not record St Peter's having an Organ till later on.

In 1817/1818, the Church is greatly enlarged. The church being so popular and full during its services that it is deemed necessary to extend the church, outwards and upwards! There was no 'upstairs' at the 1788 construction and yet the building of the church was built with the future in mind. Had this been a single story Church then the building would have been probably demolished and re-constructed, but the architect knew of this and would have had future plans for the building. Originally there would have been no access to the upper part of the Church, possible little more than a ladder to clean the windows. However in 1817/1818, there was great change to the building and this was little more than a few pews.

### **The Organ**

When the building was enlarged, the Organ was moved from its original place that was strangely listed as 'Over the Altar' and installed at the rear of the Church at the back of the gallery. The original builders of the Organ are unknown; however, the original was a 3 manual (Keyboard) powered by hand blowers. Its new position was in the west end in the gallery and there was an attempt to beautify the organ with relevant casework appropriate to the interior.

The 'Coupler' were, Swell to Pedal, Swell to Great, Swell octave to Great, Swell sub-octave to Great, Swell octave, Swell suboctave, Great to Pedal. The accessories were, 4 thumb pistons to each manual, 4 toe pistons to Swell, 4 toe pistons to Great and Pedal, Toe pistons to Great and Pedal, Toe piston for Gt/pd, Thumb Piston for Gt/pd, Sw/Gr, Thumb piston for Tromba on Swell, Balanced Swell pedal, Great and Pedal pistons combined, Switches adjustable from trays at each side of the console. The Organ was blowing electric.

The Console type was 'detached', and the stop type was 'stopkey'. The console itself was in the North part of the gallery facing South. In 1954, after the war, and possible because of the damage of the roof from the war, the Organ was rebuilt by Rushworth & Dreaper. They were an 1810 outfit and well trusted Organ builders of the day based in Liverpool.

During the conversion of St Peter's by Urban Splash, the organ was removed from the gallery at St Peter's Seel Street and installed in the Choir Gallery at the west end of Holy Family in Southport.

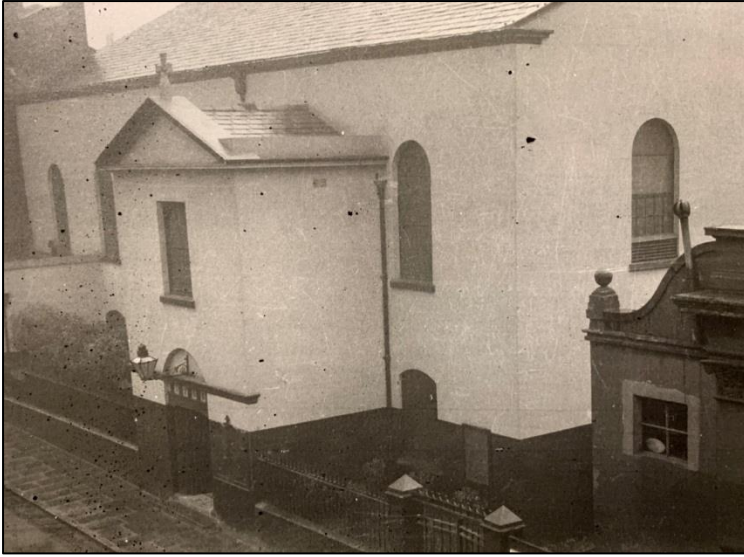
It was removed by the organ builder Syd Reeves, the organ was renovated, cleaned and reassembled in two halves rather than the original whole, the swell on the left and the great on the right. The music from this organ will continue to live on from St Peter's Seel Street to the congregation in Southport.



*Image Copyright – holyfamilysouthport.co.uk*

The plans to enlarge the building resulted in the following:

- A new Porch entrance which gave access to a staircase to lead to the upper gallery and organ loft.
- The removal of the Organ that original sat 'over the altar' and installed at the rear of the Church.
- The use of some of the Presbytery for additional room next door.



The image on the left shows the Porch and side/rear of the Church from 1938, but largely unchanged since its construction in 1810.

It shows the alteration of the Church where the side or rear entrance could be used, and the Porch provided shelter from the street before gaining access into the body of the Church. The staircase would take one up to the gallery in which further seating could be used for the service.

Further to this, the Organ was now in its correct place at the rear of the Church to project its grand music towards the front.

*Image Copyright – Liverpool Record Office.*



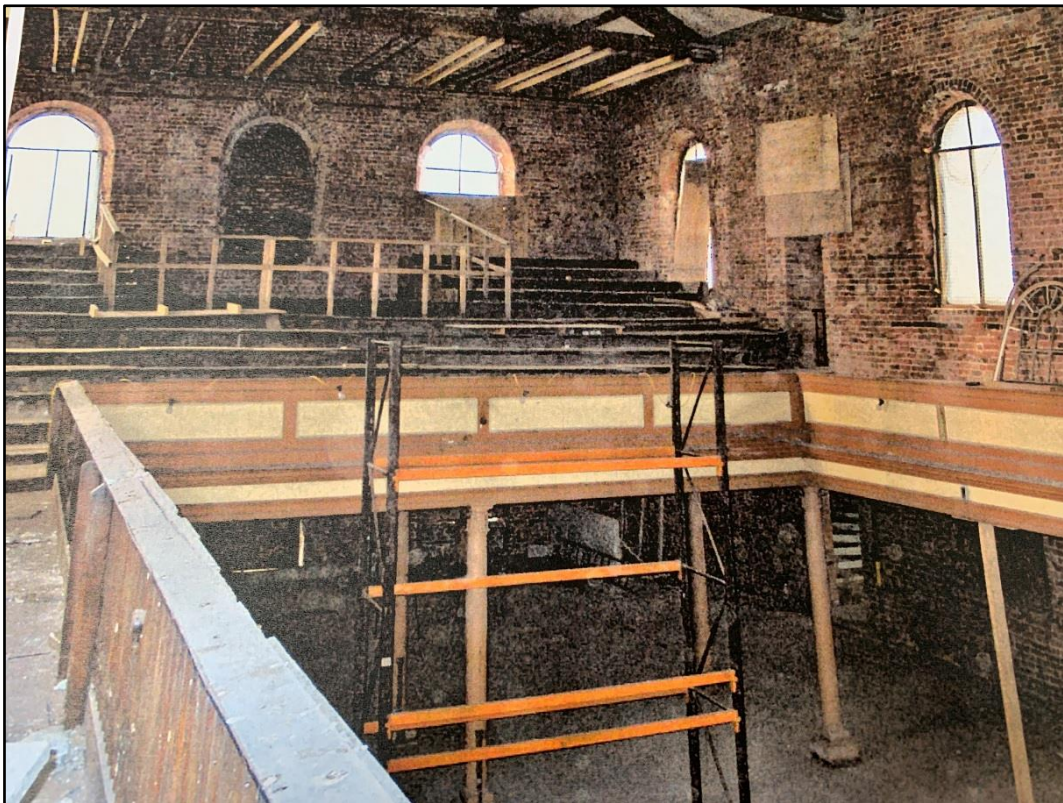
The sharp rise of the stone staircase is not truly spiral, and this allowed parishioners young and old to ascend the stairs with ease. Iron balustrades were added to the layout and later, additional wooden bannisters were installed against the outer walls of this ‘room’ so that climbers of the stairs could do so in complete safety. The stairs are not very challenging and rise well to the small landing before entering the gallery area. Prior to this doorway, there would have been a stained-glass window here. *Above images copyright Jonathon Wild.*

Even to the present day, the Porch area is a great asset to the building, and it affords access to the upper floors of the current use of the building. While there was a loss of a stained-glass window of where the porch ‘entrance’ was placed, it is a worth edition to the building and yet, one wonders why this was not built with this construction from the start. Certainly, the building could hold more parishioners in their service, and the ‘upper floor’ would have been an asset to the building, yet it took 25 years before the idea to open the church further. Was it a lack of money from the start, was it an error on the part of the Architect? Was it to make sure that the building looked ‘full’ on its ground floor services? It was a grand plan to enlarge the church and one could have looked down towards the Altar from a lofty grand position. The use of the gallery gave the Church a far grander appearance and yet provided no loss of space on the ground floor.





A contemporary image of the Gallery looking towards the Altar in 1926. (above) *Images Copyright Liverpool City Council.* (Below), the rear Organ gallery with the Organ removed showing restoration in 2003.



While the alteration of the building provided further seating, the repositioning of the Organ, a new Porch and staircase, it was still deemed important enough to have a 'reopening' of the Church. And Fr. Robinson would have wasted no time in making this a grand important occasion to showcase his 'new' property. The reopening of the building took place on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1812. It was noted that the choir sang Mozart's Twelfth Mass and Fr. Baines, O.S.B (later Bishop) preached.

However, Fr Robinson did not stop there and made further changes to the street.

## 78 Seel Street



*Historic England (copyright)* lists the building as:

*Warehouse probably once a school. 1830's, brick, with stone dressings, slate roof, 2 storeys with basement, 5 bays, top pediment/gable with plaque. Basement lintel course. Ground floor windows have chamfered lintels those to 1st floor on sill band, with wedge lintels. All windows have casements. Reeded doorcase and framed fanlight.*

The building is currently used for the Nightclub 'Brooklyn Mixer' and comprises of a ground floor, upper floor and basement area in a large open plan building with large windows and some original features.

This building was the former St Peter's School on Seel Street. It was noted on the front of the building that the inscription date was 1817 but this was a modern addition. The 1920's St Peter's Seel Street Bazaar Handbook lists this as opening in 1817, but the history from this book is based on the Centenary Record from 1888. It is difficult to confirm the actual date even with Gore's directory. The directory for 1841 lists the erection of the building as 1<sup>st</sup> July 1831.

To determine the history further, the lease of the properties of the street have to be reviewed further. If one is to review the lease of 1789 then this is accompanied by a plan showing the chapel, and next to it the house 'and garden on the other side of Seel Street'. This area is marked 'School'. Further information in the lease presents the information of '*a piece of ground with the school theron erected on the North West side of Seel Street*'.

The general review of the layout of the street was that there was a small school that was opposite the Church in 1789 and this was part of, or in conjunction with St Peter's Seel Street. The school was then moved from the other side of the road in 1817 where it was next door but one to St Peter's, and then in 1831, the present building was erected for use for St Peter's School.

To go back to the history of this school in the past, there was a joint project between the Church and the Corporation. If the St Peter's Bazaar Handbook is read carefully, it mentions that in the past, a wealthy burgess had founded and endowed a local school.

This endowment ended during the time of the Reformation but the Corporation continued to house this school and for a part time, it was housed in the former chapel of Our Lady Del Key. It was later transferred to School Lane (of which the lane takes its name from). However it was overshadowed by the Blue Coat School and after the last schoolmaster passed away in 1803, it was no more.

However, further schools were established in the area such as Bevington Bush and Park Lane.





The images above and below are from the interior shots of Brooklyn Mixer, the club that is now housed in 78 Seel Street, and while it has been transformed from that of a School to a nightclub, one can still see the large layout of the property and understand how large a school this was compared to the smaller houses on Seel Street at the time. The building is fairly uniform in its style, a main entrance door from a flight of steps leads in to the ground floor level with 4 large windows. A further staircase rises to the first floor where there are 5 large windows that bring the light in from outside.

*Both images copyright venuescannercom & snookarchitects.com*





### Fr. Robinson

Fr. Robinson had, up until 1828, served the Parish for 12 years, and it was not surprising that after devoting so much time to the re-ordering of the Chapel, the construction of St Peter's School and the general overview of the Chapel, his health started to fail and to help with the general running of the Church, a second assistant was sent to St Peter's to assist. The staff at the church would remain as 3. The first to be named was Fr. Prest and the follows the further assistants:

- **Richard Ambrose Prest:** Born 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1801. He was Clothed in 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec 1818 and Professed in 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec 1819. And Ordained on the 18<sup>th</sup> Dec 1824. His Missions were: Knaresborough 1824, Swinburne 1828, St Peter's Liverpool 1828, Aigburth 1837, Stockeld 1844, Aigburth 1850, Rixton 1851, Waterloo, Liverpool 1852, Aigburth 1853, Hereford 1859. He founded the Mission at Grassendale, Liverpool and died on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 1860 aged 59.
- **George Alban Caldwell:** Born on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1806. He Professed in 1825. His Missions were at St Peter's Liverpool in 1832, Clayton Green 1834, St Peter's Liverpool 1839, Ormskirk 1844, Little Crosby 1856, Lee House Preston – 1859, Netherton 1868. He died on the 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 1870 aged 63.
- **William Placid Corlett:** Born on the 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1807 and Professed in 1825. His Missions were St Peter's Liverpool – 1834, Hindley 1836, and Standish 1863. He died on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 1872.
- **Michael Placid Sinnott:** Born on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1803 and Professed in 1827. His Missions were L Malvern – 1835, St Peter's Liverpool – 1833, Colwich – 1839, Weobly – 1841, Coventry – 1848, Bungay 1850, Chideock 1854, Dowlais 1857, Merthyr Tydvil 1859, Stanbrook 1865, Rhymney 1866, Stratford 1867, Ch Sodbury 1869. He Died on the 7<sup>th</sup> Jan 1896. Sinnott held the record for the longest 'in service' at the age of 92 years old.

### Fr. Joseph Vincent Glover

Fr. Robinson resigned from his post in 1835. After 19 years of long service and some ill health, he finally left St Peter's and passed away on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1837. He was buried at Seel Street and reburied at Ampleforth in July 2004.

After Fr. Robinson's long service at the Church, Fr Glover's was short (1835 – 1838). It was noted that his health was already in decline and his tablet states, "*Delicate in Constitution, and worn out in the service of the Public*". Only two years after he resigned his post, he passed away in Brownedge. It is little surprise that his health suffered as those years were full of change in the town. Not all of it good. The Municipal Reform Act came in to force in 1835. The city had been governed by a common council for a long time – its membership was for life. Quite simply, any vacancies that occurred were filled by the council itself. There had been great work done in creating and sustaining the fortune of the Liverpool shipping, but all this was about to change. The Liberal reformers came into force and the first elections almost absorbed all the Tories.

This was not a good time. The Liberals took charge and populated many changes, but it was their religious education policy that was too fair-minded. They simply allowed Ministers of all denominations to teach at stated hours in the Corporation Schools. The Church of England was not impressed as this muscled in on their monopoly and provoked attacks and turned against the Catholics and the Irish. In 1836, only three liberals gained seats and the party restored to the Church of England, the monopoly of religious teaching in the two Corporation Schools. Quite simply, Catholic children had to be withdrawn and the era of mixed schools was ended.



It is little surprise that Fr. Glover's inscription stated that he was worn out. He would have been under full pressure to have seen great unrest at his Church, but even more so, within St Peter's School and because of removal of Children from the school, this would have meant some parishioners moving away from the Church – less numbers meant less assistance and population at the Church, and less in the collection box each service. *Image copyright Jonathon Wild.*

### Fr Ralph Ephrem Pratt

Fr Ralph Ephrem Pratt was born on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1802. He Professed in 1820 and was educated at Downside. His missions were at: Knaresborough 1832, St Peter's Liverpool 1838, Redditch 1840, and Coventry 1850.

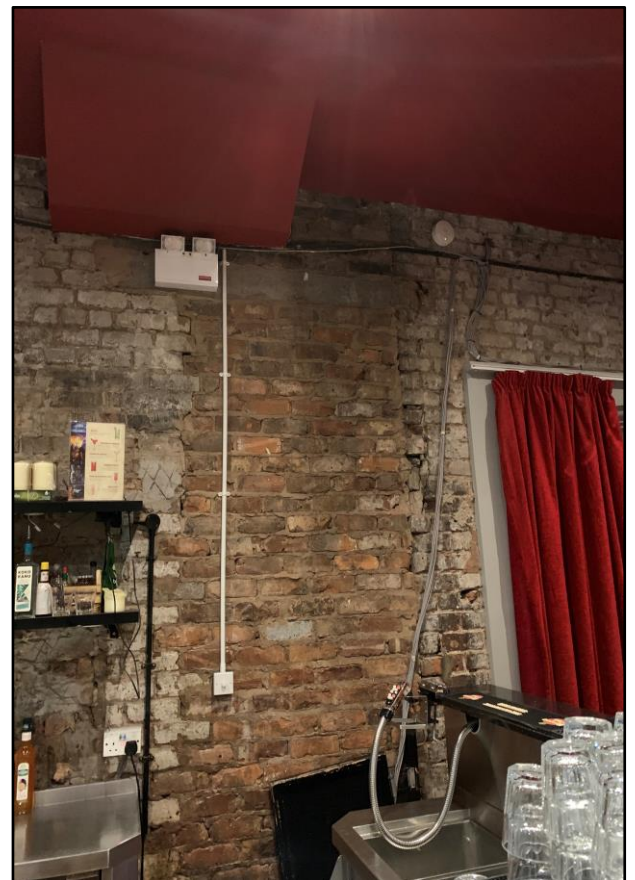
He came from Yorkshire and had already served 5 years at Knaresborough before taking up the role as Rector at St Peter's in 1838. While his tenure was short at the Church, he made some interesting changes to the physical building. He wanted to improve the Sanctuary of the building. At this point, the Church would have slightly encroached into the Sanctuary and he wanted to make further improvements to this area of the church.

He made the use of two additional vestries with an organ loft over one of them. History does not record the physical changes in a drawing, but this would have surely encroached into the Presbytery, though it was not fully extended until 1845. Was the original brick wall knocked through at this stage where the original altar stood, and space given from the Presbytery? The Organ loft was stated to have been over this Vestry. It was still in use till 1868, it was used for the Choir. When the choir and Organ were transferred to the rear of the building, the recess was sometimes referred to as St Anthony's Chapel.



Again, viewing the physical layout of the Lady Chapel (which wasn't constructed till 1845), there is a further change in brickwork and there is evidence of either a window or doorway bricked up that was once the main part of the 'back wall' of the Church. Was this extended in to at the time? History does not record the full layout of this side of the Church which would have been 'external' at one point. Was this the recess that was named St Anthony's Chapel later to be completely changed into the Lady Chapel in 1845? It remains a mystery itself until further historical information is to hand.

Upon further physical research on the building, the original brick wall that housed the alter shows a bricked-up door or window area. This would have led into the Presbytery. Was this part of the Presbytery used as a recess which would have encroached on the layout of the building? This would not have been a basic extension but would have afforded access to the upper part of the organ loft for access, and any repair work. There is no sign of any staircase from the Church itself, was the entrance of the presbytery used as sole access to the Organ and choir loft? *Images copyright Jonathon Wild.*



In 1840, Fr Pratt left St Peter's and went to serve at Redditch. In 1870 he retired and sadly in 1875, he passed away on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 1875 at Downside.

It was noted that Fr. Primavesi had taken great lengths to secure a portrait of Fr. Pratt. However, one was produced and was hung in the Presbytery. The image showed him in his later years as when he came to St Peter's, he was already 36.

Noted as the assistants of Fr Glover and Fr Pratt were Frs Prest, Caldwell and Carlett and Sinnott as previously mentioned, however there was also Fr Worsley.

- **Fr John Clement Worsley:** He was born on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 1812 and came to Ampleforth in 1826. Clothed in 1831, he Professed on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 1833. His Missions were at St Peter's Liverpool in 1838, Rainhill in 1840 and Bath in 1842. He died on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1886 aged 74 at Bath.

### Fr. James Francis Appleton

Fr James Francis Appleton was born on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1807 in Preston. He was clothed on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 1826, professed on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 1827, and was Ordained in 1830.

Before becoming the next Rector at St Peter's, he was held in high esteem because of his previous work as Prior of his monastery in Douai. He made great efforts in reorganisation, clearing debts and development of the monastery, at a cost to himself. His health suffered and he resigned and was sent across to Seel Street, Liverpool.

However, he must have enough rest at St Peter's as he found renewed enthusiasm and saw what the Church needed – it needed to be enlarged again!

### 76 Seel Street



No 76 Seel Street is listed by English Heritage as: *(Copyright)*

*House. Early C19. Brick with stone dressings, slate roof. 3 storeys. 3 bays. Windows have wedge lintels; 2<sup>nd</sup> floor windows have casements, others are sashed, those to 1<sup>st</sup> floor with glazing bars. Top cornice. Plain iron area railings. Panelled door and round traceried fanlight in wooden doorcase of pilasters, panelled tympanum and cornice.*

While St Peter's Seel Street was built first, 76 Seel Street was not far behind. Constructed at the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century for the Priests to serve the Church, it was a 3-story building of generous proportions.

Fr. Appleton must have had enough influence to have decided to knock through in the Presbytery. The main parts of the floors were removed, and the result transformed into the Sanctuary, the wall between the old Church and house being taken down. The smaller front room of the building became the sacristy and the first floor over the now disused balcony and with a store-room behind, facing the street.

It was noted that 'On the last Sunday after Pentecost, 1845, the following was noted: After today, there will be no Mass either on Sundays before Christmas when it will be reopened for Divine Service'. *(Image – copyright Google Maps)*

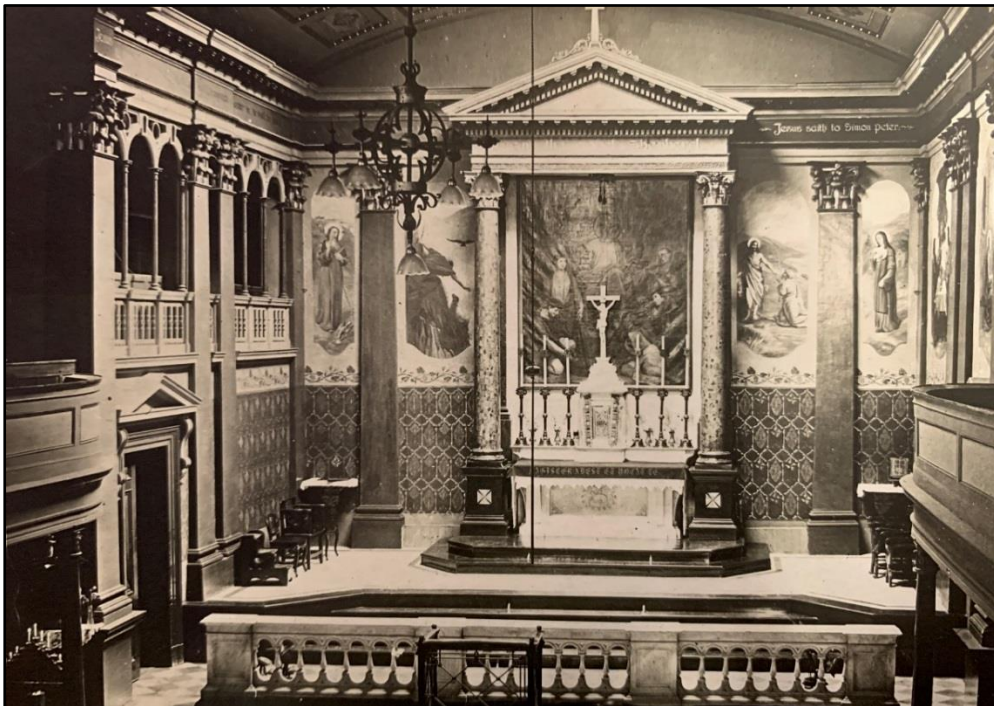




The building of the new Sanctuary took place between November 23<sup>rd</sup> and December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1845 and transformed the Church. While it made the front room of the presbytery smaller in size, the Churches space was considerably extended – and served as a new function, as the focal point would have then been at the grand new Altar. The Fr's could access the Church from the presbytery and vice versa.



Above left shows the original entrance to the Presbytery now with the additional temporary wall constructed for the Bar/Restaurant storeroom. This would have once been open plan and is shown by the original cornice on the ceiling. However, no staircase remains in this property. Would this have been positioned by the front door affording access to upstairs or the front room as soon as you walk into the property? The answer is lost in the history of time and wasn't recorded. *Above images copyright Jonathon Wild.*



The image on the left shows the Sanctuary in an undated view. It completely transformed the Church and gave access to the Presbytery, the balcony and gave a focal point to the Church Altar. The use of the Sanctuary gave additional space and because it was raised, gave a clearer view of the service.

*Copyright Liverpool Record Office.*

## 1847 – The Great Famine

Between 1845 and 1849, the Great Famine (or The Great Hunger) was a period for Ireland for its mass starvation, disease and emigration. This timeline is also named the Irish Potato Famine and the eventual emigration for many people from Ireland caused the population to drop by up to 25%.

The cause was the Potato Blight. It is effectively water mould from a micro-organism that effects the crop and either goes on to provide disease to the consumer, or provide such famine that people literally starved.

The Blight infected potato crops across Europe which resulted in deaths of over 100,000 in total. To escape this Famine, many hundreds of thousands emigrated across to the mainland UK. Liverpool was no exception and traditionally, the port of Liverpool had the greatest influx of immigrants due to it being the closest port to Ireland. Even today, Liverpool has great Irish ancestry, owing to the migration to Liverpool, and where people decided to stay in the city.



However, the City of Liverpool wasn't just open to Irish immigration during these times, over 50,000 Irish migrants were already living in Liverpool by the end of the 1830's. However, when the Irish Famine took hold at the start of 1845, it was estimated that over 1.5million people crossed the sea heading for Liverpool.

During the crossing, over a third of people had already passed away from hunger and disease. While many people used Liverpool as a further port to travel to America, over 30,000 people stayed in Liverpool. While the Liverpool Docks provided work for the locals, the Irish were not welcome. It was thought that they would take jobs and spread disease and cause further upset. They often took low-paid jobs just to stay alive. Women were even harder hit as there would be casual jobs advertised, yet they would often state 'No Irish'.

In Liverpool, the township has changed so that some parts that were poor are now affluent, while some affluent parts of the city are now considered to be less important than they used to be. Continuing with hunger disease and already insanitary conditions of the poor areas of Liverpool, an epidemic of typhus began. (The Great Plague). In 1846, typhus was reported in Liverpool. However, it was a small outbreak of just over 400 reported cases. They could be contained and monitored. However, with the influx of Irish after the Great Hunger, over 57,000 cases were reported in Liverpool alone. This was raised in a Vestry meeting at St Peter's on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 1847.



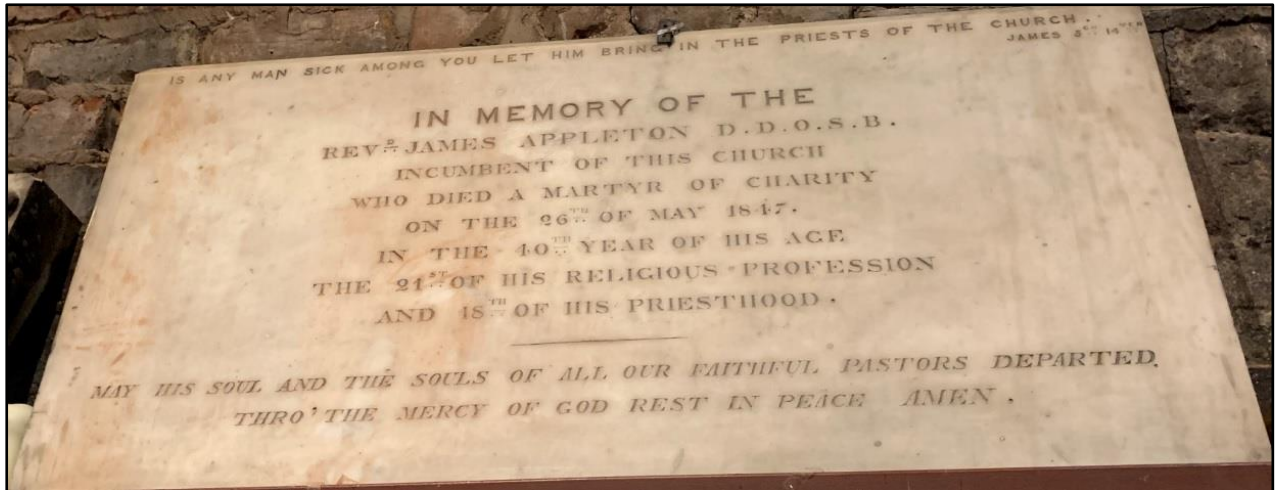
James Francis Appleton was born on the 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1807. He was Clothed on the 20<sup>th</sup> Oct 1826, Professed on the 14<sup>th</sup> Nov 1827 and Ordained in 1830. (He built up St Edmunds at Dowai and later foundations of the later Chapel).

His Mission was at St Peter's from 1841 onwards but suffered the effects of Typhus. This was sadly caused by administrating to the sick in the Parish. However, he gradually recovered only to be struck down after consuming some whiskey – against the doctors orders. The Whisky acted like poison to his body and died on a visit to Stanbrook. He died on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 1847 at the age of 40.

Outside St Patrick's Chapel in Toxteth, Liverpool, there is a monument which the inscription reads: In memory of the Liverpool priests who, attending the sick caught typhus fever and died in 1847.

In one inscription states: Rev. JAMES APPLETON, D.D., O.S.B., of St. Peter's, May 26. (Image copyright – geography.org.uk)





In the Lady Chapel of St Peter's Church, there is a tablet which reads as above: *(Image copyright Jonathon Wild)*

IF ANY MAN SICK AMONG YOU LET HIM BRING IN THE PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH

IN MEMORY OF THE  
REV JAMES APPLETON D. D. O. S. B.  
INCUMBENT OF THIS CHURCH  
WHO DIED A MARTYR OF CHARITY  
ON THE 26<sup>TH</sup> MAY 1847  
IN THE 40<sup>TH</sup> YEAR OF HIS AGE  
THE 21<sup>ST</sup> OF HIS RELIGIOUS PROFESSION  
AND 18<sup>TH</sup> OF HIS PRIESTHOOD

MAY HIS SOUL AND THE SOULS OF ALL OUR FAITHFUL PASTORS DEPARTED  
THRO' THE MERCY OF GOD REST IN PEACE AMEN.

In January 1847, it was noted that there were 24 priests in Liverpool. At the end of September, ten of them were dead and of the other 14, eight had caught the typhus but survived. The loss of Fr Appleton greatly affected the Church and services were stopped for a time being – as well as for other Churches in the area.

### Fr. Thomas Benedict Bonney



Thomas Benedict Bonney was born on the 6<sup>th</sup> Feb 1813. He was Clothed on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 1834, Professed on the 16<sup>th</sup> October 1835, and Ordained in 1839.

He came to St Peter's in 1847 a note or two must be mentioned of the change to the district of which fell under his Parish. Bold Street was changing from that of a residential street to more of a commercial shopping street, and the Salthouse Dock was swept away taking many roads with it and its residents. In Norfolk Street, a temporary chapel – a mere shed in appearance, was erected in 1852 in to a parish separate from St Patrick's and its new church, St Vincent's was opened 4 years later.

Bonney would have come to the Church with the new Altar and layout and would not have seen the 'smaller' venue. He would have been well pleased with the Church and would have considered this as a well fashioned place to be. The town was taking shape and would have seen an influx of people at the 'new' St Peter's Church. He would go to understand this Church and Parish well for the next 16 years. *(Copyright Liverpool Record Office)*

## The Crypt

The last burial in St Peter's Vaults was in 1854. History does not record the exact location of the original entrance of the Vaults. The entrance would have been large enough to have walked down with ease, and with the interment of a coffin, it would have been an occasion where more than one person could fit down with ease.

The Vault entrance today is a small hatch in the storeroom of the former Presbytery and is not opened to the public. On closer inspection, it appears to run under the former presbytery and also run further under the present Chancel and Altar.



The entrance to the Vaults is now through a narrow hatch, which in turn gives access to a ladder for access into this area. The picture to the left shows the ladder leading from the hatch and behind the ladder is the original boiler workings for the Church.

The Vaults are dry and appear to be a constant temperature being underground, yet the air is stale through a lack of use and a lack of fresh air running through the room.

It is pitch black when a torch is turned off!

Turning to the left to understand the layout of the crypt, there is further space and further walls which provide an insight into the extension to the Altar chamber in front of the camera.

*Images copyright Jonathon Wild.*







Following the walls, the Vaults split in to two at this point. One direction head towards a door and enclosed section, while the other section provides vaulted archways to the right-hand side.

The brickwork is in good order and supports the full weight of the house/altar above and yet intricate enough to form an arched area for its natural uses.

*Images copyright Jonathon Wild.*

On the left-hand side of the vaults, there is a wooden door which leads to a sectioned off part of the vault. Inside is empty yet this may have been an area for coffins of a grander nature that were sealed off at one point.

It may have been a further storeroom for interments, but history does not record any ashes or caskets that were placed in the Vaults, only coffins.



In the centre of the crypt are the arched vaults which span part of the right-hand side of the crypt. They are about 5ft high and would have been the place to have stored coffins under.

As the vaults go further underground, the area is still spacious and still provides the visual history on the layout of the Church above and the extension into the new Altar.





### Fr. Thomas Benedict Bonney (Continued)

It was noted that the Church had prospered during these years and there is no greater indication than when the notes on Fr. Bonney confirmed that he had 10 Priests assisting him during his time at the Church. These were:

- **Fr. T. M. Margison** – 1847-1851 - (Additional details unknown)
- **Fr. J. B. Swale** – 1847 -1850 - John Bede Swale, Born in 1808 and was Clothed in 1826, Professed in 1827, Ordained 1832. His Missions were: Felton 1846, St Peter's Liverpool 1847, Birtley 1850, Easingwold 1879.
- **Fr. C. W Price** – 1850 – 1851 - Charles Wilfred Price, Born in Liverpool on the 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1819. Clothed in 1834, at Broadway. He Professed in 1836 and Ordained on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec 1849. His Missions were: St Anne's Liverpool 1850, Coventry 1852, Chideok 1853, Coventry 1854, Chepstow 1857, Abergavenny 1858, Chideock 1859, Bridgend 1864, Swansea 1873, Clytha 1877.
- **Fr. T. M. Shephard** – 1851 - Thomas Maurus Shepherd, Born in 1819, he was Clothed in 1837, Professed in 1838, Ordained in 1843. His Missions: Brownedge 1844, Leyland 1845, St Mary's Liverpool 1851, St Peter's Liverpool, 1851, Whitehaven 1852, Holme Hall 1860, St Mary's Liverpool 1860, Netherton 1870. He died on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1819 aged 71.
- **Fr. J. I. Dewhurst** – 1851 – 1858 – James Ignatius Dewhurst – Born 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1815 in Ashton, Clothed 7<sup>th</sup> Feb 1834, Professed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb 1835, Ordained 1843. His Missions: St Peter's Liverpool 1851, Swinburne 1858, Ormskirk 1858, Leyland 1860, Morpeth 1873, Aberford 1875, Stanbrook 1879, Fort Augustus 1882, Lee House 1883. He died on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 1886.
- **Fr. M. A. Hankinson** – 1851-1858 - Michael Adrian Hankinson, he was born on the 29<sup>th</sup> Sep 1817, Clothed in 1836, Professed in 1837, Ordained in 1841. His missions: St Peter's Liverpool 1851, Bishop of Port Louis 1863. He died on the 21<sup>st</sup> September 1870.
- **Fr. W. Davey** – 1854-1864 (Additional details unknown).
- **Fr. P. M. Anderson** – 1858-1863 – Percy Maurus Anderson – Born 17<sup>th</sup> March 1828, Clothed on the 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1847, Professed 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 1849, Ordained 10<sup>th</sup> April 1854. His Missions St Peter's Liverpool 1858, Cowpen 1866, St Peter's (again) 1873.
- **Fr. R. W. Cooper** – 1863-1864 – (Ralph Wilfred Cooper, Born 15<sup>th</sup> Aug 1819, Clothed in 1835, Professed 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1836, Ordained 1844. His missions: St Mary's Liverpool 1845, St Anne's Liverpool 1848, St Peter's Liverpool 1863, St Augustines Liverpool 1863, Clayton Green 1875. He died on the 30<sup>th</sup> Jan 1877 age 57.
- **Fr. J. B. Murphy** – 1864 – Joseph Benedict Murphy – Born 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1834, Professed in 1855. His missions: St Augustine's Liverpool 1862, St Anne's Liverpool 1863, St Peter's Liverpool 1864, Ormskirk 1864, Lee House Preston 1868, St Alban's Warrington 1870, Lee House Preston 1871, Cowpen 1874, Ryhmney 1876. He died on the 5<sup>th</sup> Feb 1877.

It was stated that Fr Bonney looked strong and stable in his portrate in the Church, but he was worn out by his labours and died of Malaria at Malvern at the age of 51. His parishioners built the Lady Chapel to his memory.

### William Augustine Davey

In 1864, there was to be great change at the Church, both a new Rector and a new Lady Chapel attached to the building. However a small note must be made for the Inspection of the School that was attached to the Church and Parish. In October 1864, there was a new education Act where schools where eligible for a grant subject to a successful sign off from an Inspector. This was no mean feat and thanfully to the historians, a full record Log must have been kept. The records for St Peter's School were of great interest and they were pulled from history in 1926 when Fr. Primavsei asked the Headmaster of the school, Mr McGuinness to extract the history of the school and provide notes on the building and interior.

Quoted in the notes as written: *Before 1864, the present Boys School accommodated the three departments. Infants in the Basement, Girls in the Top Floor, Boys on the Ground Floor. The school yard was divided in to two by a brick wall parallel to the Church itself. Two doors opened in to Back Seel Street. The half of the Yard near the Lady Chapel by the Girls and Infants. In 1864, the Boys were transferred to the building adjoining the prsent boys' school and occupied the Top Floor. The Ground Floor of that building was the residence of the Clerk of the Church, Mr McIntyre. The V. Rev. Abbot Snow informed the present writer that the rent of the building was £80 per annum when it was decided to build the Gilbert Street Schools. The First Headmaster, Mr Curran, was assisted by Mr Hugh Kelly.*



Further to these notes, it stated that there were two small Church Note Books of interest from 1845 to 1855 and then after a gap of about 10 years, more detailed notes are taken. The first part of the notes show extracts such as *'no more charity given at the presbytery door'*, *'More teachers wanted'* *'parents to blame for absense'* *'non attendance for four Sundays means no invitation to the Christmas Treat.*

Was this down to a burst of energy for during this time, the transistion took place from that of Fr. Davey to that of Fr. Caldwell. Fr Davey had served the Parish well, none years as a Curate and one as Rector. He held further missions and retired to Belmont Abbey where he passed away at the great age of 90 in 1914.

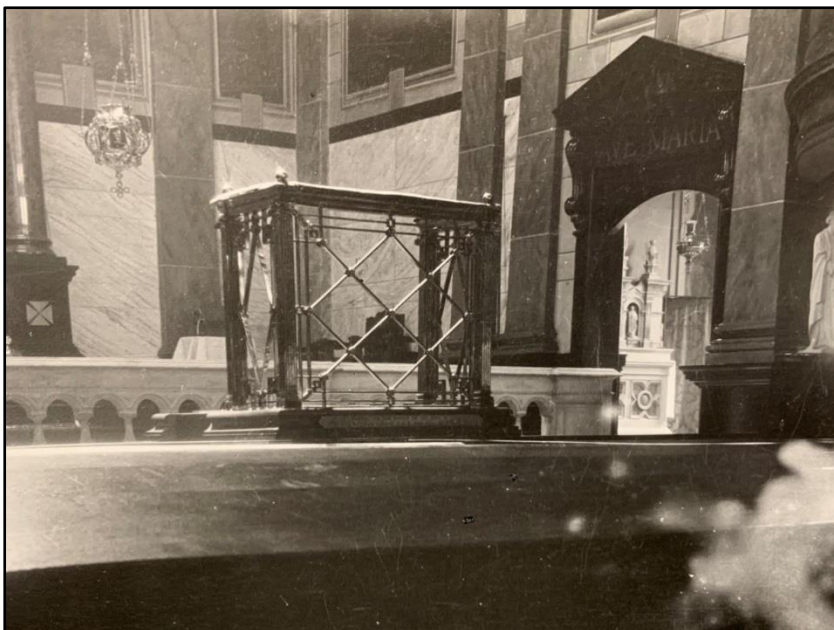
### **The Lady Chapel**

During the timeframe of Fr. Bonney's tenure at St Peter's Church Street, (1847-1864) 10 Priests served under him (detailed on the past page) and as stated, he was a very popular and hard working Fr. His portrate hung in the Church and yet he was worn out by his labours of the Church and died of Malaria at Malvern at the age of 51 in 1864.

Naturally, the Church mourned such a great respected person and felt that they had to recognise his work to St Peter's by a grand gesture. This would be something that would benefit the Church and have a lasting impact for future parishioners. History does not record the exact details of the background to the Lady Chapel. In the notes of the history of St Peter's, this detail seems to have been overlooked, yet this would have been one of the greatest editions to the Church. The land that was owned by St Peter's afforded an extension to the Church. The Church was not 'listed' in any way at that time so the extensions to the Church would only have to have been passed through the Fr. at the time, and also the Corporation.

In 1845, the extension of the Church in to the new Sanctuary and Altar area was complete. The wall on the right would have had no doorway that is currently there, but it would have made sense to have had some sort of matching archway so the layout of the sanctuary would be uniform in its layout. At the time of the extension in 1845, Fr Bonney was still very much in service and may or may not have considered an extension to the Church. What is noted is that after his death, a grand money raising event took place and such amount (unknown) was enough to construct the Lady Chapel.

The Lady Chapel was an even greater extension to the Church than previous thought. Parishioners could go directly in to the Lady Chapel to pray, speak to the Fr in private, or there could be very intimate services taking place in the Lady Chapel. Access was via two doors. Either from that of the Sanctuary, or from the side aisle of the Church on the right hand side.



The image on the left shows the Sanctuary of the extended Altar section of the church, and a 'sneak preview' of the Lady Chapel through the arched door.

The doors to the Lady Chapel could have been closed for complete privacy yet luckily in this shot, the doors were left open to see the layout of the Church.

The picture also shows the Pulpit in the centre of the Chancel where the Fr could preach from, and still have private access to both the Lady Chapel and the Presbyterian.

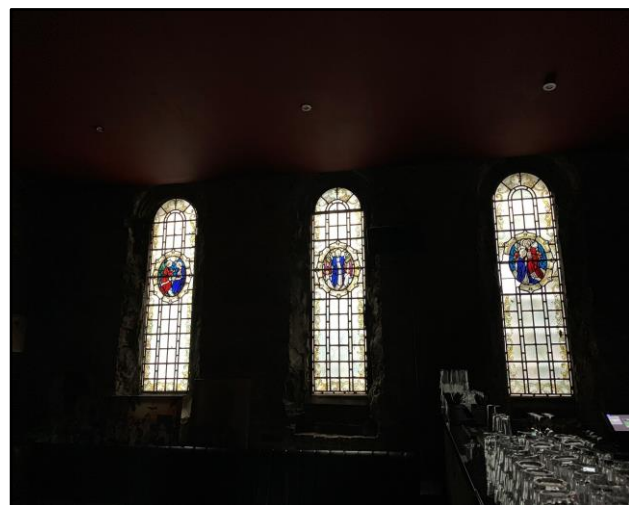
*Image taken in 1938 – Copyright Liverpool Record Office.*



The above image shows the elaborate Altar of the Lady Chapel and the statues that adorned the room. The original stained glass windows are in situ in this picture as well as a couple of pews for private services or to pray in privacy. The Lady Chapel was opulent in its own right and gave a more intimate area from the open style of the Church layout. It is a great puzzle why there is virtually no written history on the extension of the Church or intimate details of the Lady Chapel, only that the fact it was constructed in the memory of Fr. Bonney. History again does not record the removal of the altar of the Lady Chapel and whether this took place before or during the renovation of 2003. If this was removed from the Church, where did this end up?

Again, history does not record the removal of this item where other items of lesser significance were recorded in their new 'home'. The Lady Chapel had the most intricate detail of the Church yet very little has been recorded apart from the above photograph of the only surviving image of the Lady Chapel.

The image above is undated but it is certainly pre-World War 2 as the stained glass is different from the current design. *Image above - copyright Liverpool Record Office. Images below copyright Jonathon Wild.*



### John Bernard Caldwell

In 1866, Fr Caldwell was the next Fr to appear at the Church after the transition from Fr Davey to Fr Caldwell. He was born on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 1826, Clothed in 1844, Professed in 1845, Ordained in 1850. His Missions apart from St Peter's were: Seaton Delaval – 1852, St Anne's Liverpool – 1854, Chideok – 1857, Abergavanny 1859, Whitehaven 1863, Acton Burnell 1876, Studley 1878, Gt Malvern 1891, Abbots Salford 1892, Ch Sodbury 1894, Alcester 1896, Coughton 1897, Wellingore 1902.

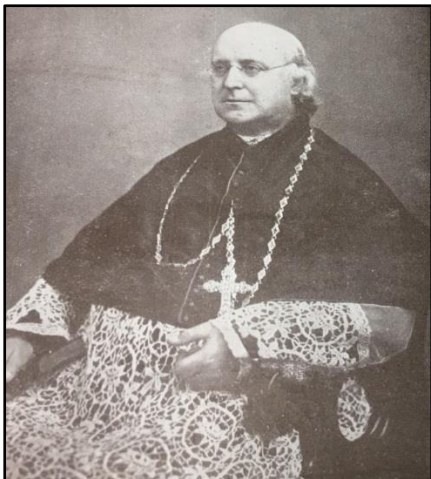
Fr Caldwell was only at St Peter's for a year. But despite this short tenure, he put St Peter's on the map in the musical circles throughout England. In 1866, Raymond Steinforth became choir master on the retirement of Miss Mary Withnall and the death of Mrs Scarisbrick.

We have to go back to a note from a former member of the St Peter's Choir who states that Mr Steinforth took over the running of the Choir and its conductorship and carried on this procedure for over 40 years. It was during this period in time where many important sacred compositions were rendered, Masses by Mozart, Haydn, Hummel Cherubini, Beethoven, Gounod. There were also works and voluntaries by Handel, Mendelssohn, Rossini, Reissiger, Schubert, as well as other composed by himself. It was stated that he wrote over 200 compositions.

Further to this, distinguished vocalists were associated with the choir such as Garcia, Foli, Trebelli, Sir Charles Santley, Miss Jessie Bond, Aynsley Cook, and J. L. Hatton. The organist at the time at St Peter's was Franklyn Howarth. It was noted that the beauty of the musical services attracted worshippers from all parts of the City, and St Peter's was put right back on the map. It was even stated that visitors from foreign lands found their way from hotels they were staying in on a Sunday to the old Church.

The Liverpool Daily Post noted that Steinforth was a man of many talents. Noted as a man of many talents, he was a lawyer, musician, linguist, man of the world etc. 'He wrote 200 compositions' and stated that even when Sailors returned home, they would still go to St Peter's or at least state that they had heard Steinforth's 'O Salutaris'. Caldwell composed till the eve of his death and passed away on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1908. The Church would greatly miss his musical direction.

### Fr. William Benedict Scarisbrick



Fr. Scarisbrick was born on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 1828. He was Clothed in 1844, Professed in 1845 and Ordained in 1853. His Missions were at Hereford 1857, Cheltenham 1861, Stratford on Avon 1866, St Peter's Liverpool 1866, Bishop of Port Louis 1872.

He would be the tenth Rector at St Peter's and his tenure was from 1866 to 1872. Again, like previous Fr's, he made his mark on the Church in his own way. In the latter part of his last year, the opening of the Girl's and Infants' School in Gilbert Street took place, of which he was credited for, along with his assistant priests.

He also saw the need to create a Guild and so the St Peter's Guild was formed in 1870. There was no contemporary record of this, but this was noted at a Mission in 1870. The Church notices for the Low Sunday remind the S. P. G (St Peter's Guild) is to be held 'after the evening service next Sunday'.

One of the greatest additions to St Peter's History is that Fr. Scarisbrick issued in Jan 1869, a small pamphlet of about 20 pages entitled 'St Peter's Seel Street Liverpool'. Report for 1868 and Guide for 1869. We are indebted to Fr Scarisbrick for this act. It details the history of the Parish (or District) and provided a very detailed description of various aspects. In this booklet is a list of the local streets in the Town where the names of the Priest's that cared for particular people in the area. It also provides details of the services at St Peter's and the hours. (Above image, *copyright Liverpool Record Office*)



We find that Sunday masses are at 7, 8, 9-30am and 11. The evening service on Sunday is always the Vespers of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Further notes contained reveal that there was a special service for every Friday in the month – the Sacred Heart, Souls of Purgatory, Stations of the Cross, and Devotions for a Happy Death. Marriages are on a Sunday at 10am! – and mid-week by appointment only. There are six Confraternities – Perpetual Adoration, The Immaculate Heart of Mary, The Souls of Purgatory, Christian Doctrine, the Altar Society and the Young Men’s Society.

It is noted that a new organ was installed on May 3<sup>rd</sup> in the west gallery and it was suggested that the space in the recess of the Epistle gallery may be used for the Christmas Crib.

Notes include that the Lady Chapel requires re-roofing and redecorating and that there was some frustration over the diminishing parishioners. The Easter service held 1,510, and it was stated that the year had been unusually free from sickness.

A report was noted and yet considering the importance of the report, it was lost. A parishioner came to the rescue and produced a copy. It mentions the various information any standard would provide on their Church and provides details of the service times. It does, however, mention two curates of the Parish as Fr. Robert Guy and Fr. Terence Benedict Snow.

- **Fr Robert Ephrem Guy** was born on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 1833 in Swallowfield. He was Clothed on the 28<sup>th</sup> Aug 1851 at Downs, Professed on the 21<sup>st</sup> March 1852 and Ordained on the 18<sup>th</sup> June 1859. His missions were: Swinburne 1861, Warrington 1861-64, Liverpool P 1864-69, Liverpool A 1869-75, Weobly 1875-85, Abergavenny 1876-85, Bungay 1885-98. He was well known as a writer in his time and also an educational expert. He was noted for drawing large crowds at Seel Street due to his impressive sermons and after a long service he passed away on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan 1899 and was buried at Downside.
- **Fr Terence Benedict Snow** was born on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1838. He was Clothed on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 1856, Professed on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 1857, Ordained on the 19<sup>th</sup> May 1865 and was educated at Woolhampton. His missions were St Peter’s Liverpool 1868, St Mary’s Liverpool 1878, East Dulwich 1894, Last Provincial of York 1888. Fr. Snow was noted for his sketches of Liverpool scenes and was nicknamed as ‘snowflakes’ to his many friends and followers. He was mainly responsible for the organisation of the St Peter’s Guild. He passed away on the 17<sup>th</sup> Jan 1905 aged 66 at East Dulwich.

Fr Scarisbrick was appointed Bishop of Port Louis in Mauritius in 1872 and he retired some 16 years later to pass away at Great Malvern on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 1908.

### **Fr. John Ildephonsus Brown**

Fr Brown was born on the 10<sup>th</sup> July 1835 in Wigan. He was Clothed on the 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1855, Professed on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 1856, and was Ordained on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 1862. His missions were at Scarisbrick 1870, Hindley 1870, Liverpool P 1872, Brindle 1874, Grassendale 1883, Parbold 1891. History does not record anything at his time in Seel Street apart from him having served there for 2 years. He passed away on the 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 1917 aged 81 at Parbold and was buried at Parbold. We have to visit his Obituary to gain further details on his life and this is detailed as below: (*Copyright plantata.org.uk*)

*“The Very Rev. John Ildephonsus Brown, Monk and Priest of the Order of St Benedict, Cathedral Prior of Chester, and for twenty-six years the Incumbent of this Mission, was born close to this very place as far back as July 10th, 1835, so that he was within a few months of completing his eighty-second year. In his early days he was weakly, and threatened with consumption. It sounds strange now to us who can look back on eighty-two years of strong, robust manhood, in which his tall commanding figure and his fine handsome presence gained distinction in any company - but so it was. He was sent, in company with an elder brother to Ampleforth at the early age of nine, in the hope that the air in the Yorkshire moors might invigorate him. How it succeeded you are all witnesses.*

*Owing no doubt, to his delicate health, he was an unusually long time in finishing his course of studies, and did not leave the school until he was twenty. He was then wavering about his vocation. He had always wished to be a priest, but for a short time visions of Sandhurst and the glamour of arms crossed his mind, and he was undecided.*

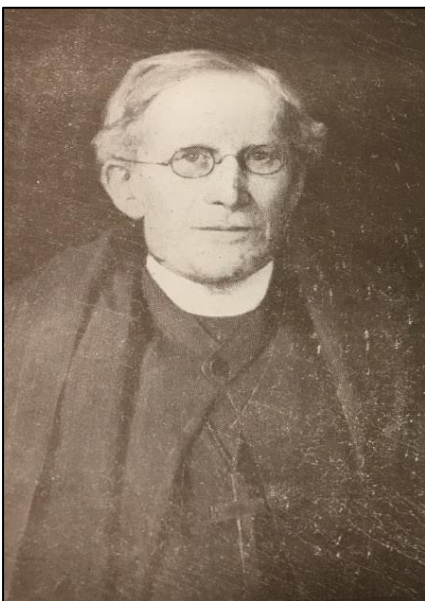
*He put his difficulty before the good Prior of the time, who recommended a year at home to clear his views. 'But,' he said, 'if I once go home I feel I may never come back.' 'In that case,' said the old Prior, and his reply is characteristic of the time, 'in that case, on had better give God the first chance, so you will begin your novitiate to-night.' He was clothed with the habit of St Benedict that very evening, in 1855, and, as he used to say, he never had a moment's doubt to the end of his life as to his vocation. If the British Army lost a fine officer, the Army of Christ gained a wholehearted soldier.*

*He was professed after a year's probation, and entered upon his seven years of study for the Priesthood. I never used to hear any of his contemporaries speak of him as distinguished in his studies. He was a hard student, plodding and conscientious - a man of character rather than of letters. He had a great taste for literature, and to the very end he was a great reader with wide interests, but he never produced anything. Sometimes a man of mediocre talent attracts attention merely because those around him are weak, and, as often, a man of real ability is overlooked because his lot is cast among those more distinguished. It explains a good deal, to those who know, if I say that among his fellow students at the time were an Oswald Tindall, a Jerome Watmough and a John Cuthbert Hedley.*

*After his ordination he taught for a few years in the College, and became Procurator. Then in 1868 he was moved to the sister Monastery of Downside. Here, after a few months, he was elected Prior by the Community, a very unusual occurrence, and after his two years of office were over, there is reason to believe he obtained their suffrages a second time. Though so long ago, and though, I believe, he never saw Downside again after 1870, it was one of the periods of his life to which he always referred with the greatest interest. Even at the very end, when his interest in most things was failing, he could always be aroused to talk of that time. He remembered everything about the place and every person, and was as proud of its present position as though he had never left it.*

*In 1870 he returned again to the Lancashire which he loved so well, and which for forty-seven years he was never to leave again. His first parish was Hindley, where Abbot Bury, had just built church, house, and schools. After a little over a year there he was made Rector of St Peter's, Liverpool, in succession to Father Scarisbrick, who was made Bishop of the Mauritius. In 1874 he was moved to Brindle, and then began that long course of life on country missions, which suited him so well, and for which he was so well adapted. He was at Brindle ten years, till 1884, and though a third of a century has since passed away, his memory is still cherished there, and true hearts have come to-day to pay their last tribute to their old Pastor. In 1884 he went to Grassendale, near Liverpool, and was there till 1892, when he came to his last home in Parbold. Here he has lived since, here he has died, and here his hallowed remains will rest till the great Resurrection Day."*

### **Fr. Percy Maurus Anderson**



Fr. Percy Maurus Anderson was born on the 17<sup>th</sup> March 1828 in York. He was clothed on the 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1847 at Ampleforth, professed on the 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 1849 and Ordained on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 1854. His missions were at St Peter's in 1858, Cowpen 1866 and back to St Peter's 1873.

Fr Anderson had served the Church well. He was a Curate from 1858-1863 and then from 1874 to 1900, he was the Rector of the Church.

He certainly welcomed the Parishioners with open arms and while his tenure did not provide any major changes in the Parish, he knew the Church and the area well. 21 years in service in different times, he would have known the building better than most other Rectors and have seen further changes to the area as the roads were built up to almost industrial standard.

Notes at the time record 'a line of carriages which lined Seel Street on a Sunday'. His sermons were most popular and the Choir in the church, over 27 names were recorded giving their service for many years.

*Image copyright – Liverpool Record Office.*

In the summer of 1883, there was one account which was recalled by Fr. William Phillipson who was one of the Curates. He cheated death in the Church and while there was no recollection of notes at the time, he wrote, some 42 years later of the story to Fr. Primavesi. It is only by chance that this historical story was noted as it could well have been lost in time.

In 1883 during the summer months, Fr. Phillipson was unvesting after a service in the Lady Chapel. He would have been going about his own business and had no foresight in to what was about to happen. A sheet of Glass weighing 228lb fell from the roof of the Lady Chapel! It did not faze him, as with the weather being kind, Mass was said on the next morning. After Mass, there was an investigation and then a Mr Jelley climbed on to the roof to inspect what had happened. As he ascended on to the roof, he found that there was a similar pane of glass that was about to fall in the same way and was hanging by a thread.

It is interesting to understand that at the time, (because the Church was not lighted by Electric) that glass was the preferred covering (or part covering) of the roof so as to let in natural light. The Lady Chapel would have been a brighter room than the main part of the church with three side windows and further glass partitions in the roof.

In 1888, the grand Centenary took place of St Peter's. Friday 7<sup>th</sup> was the chosen date and there was a grand celebration. Bishop Scarisbrick oversaw the music. The V. Rev. Canon Woods O.S.B. preached. It was noted that a small pamphlet with an interim history of the Church was produced.

The only major change during Fr. Anderson's years was the demolition of St Stephen's Church and the opening of Paradise Street in to Park Lane, with the loss of Cleveland Square.

Fr Anderson was to pass away quickly and quietly. On the Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> March he visited the Orphanage in Falkner Square and seemed in good health. There was no indication to suggest otherwise. However he was taken ill during the night and a Doctor was called for. They must have considered it serious for a Doctor to be called but nothing could be done. On the 9<sup>th</sup> March he received the Vaiticum and died in his monastic habit. Fr Anderson died on the 9<sup>th</sup> March 1900 at the age of 72.

His Obituary gave a fuller account of his death ([copyright plantata.org.uk](http://copyright.plantata.org.uk)) and is noted below:

*"On that same Wednesday afternoon he ordered a cab, and visited the orphanage in Falkner Street; he attended a Committee meeting, and made several other calls. In the evening he heard Confessions as usual, eat his supper with relish, then in his cheery way, rising from table he cried out 'Now for bed!' But it was the beginning of the end. Early to bed was his motto and as a rule very shortly after ten o'clock the light used to disappear from his room. To-night however he was restless, and the priest next door heard that he was not asleep, though it was after eleven o'clock. He surmised all was not right, but as the house-keeper had of late been in the habit of calling at Father Anderson's door the last thing before retiring, to see if he might need anything, he went to bed. Next morning he learnt that his Rector had been very ill during the night, and that the Doctor had been sent for. On entering his room he found him pinched and worn, but his words of sympathy were greeted with: 'The doctor and a sleep will soon put me to rights again.'*

*He got up at mid-day, walked about his room, took interest in the war as usual, and in the evening said his 'Office' for the following day according to his custom. He felt better at nightfall, but watch was kept that night.*

*Friday morning came, the last of his life, though he little thought it as he rose, dressed and shaved himself early enough to find himself in his arm chair by nine o'clock. He felt no better however, only he thanked God he was not in pain. He could not sit long and lay much on the sofa or sometimes walked about. The doctor visited him at ten in the morning, at two in the afternoon and at six in the evening. He evidently thought the case extreme. After the last visit he crossed over to the church and entering one of the confessionals startled the priest by saying that his patient was rapidly sinking, and that if there was not a great change for the better by 9-30 when he proposed to pay another visit, the rites of the Church should be administered.*

*The priest shortly afterwards went over from the church to the presbytery. He was in his own room when almost immediately the house-keeper hurried in to say that Father Anderson was dying. Surely enough he was; sitting in his chair fully dressed as usual in his habit, as he had been all day. He seemed unconscious but when laid upon the sofa he breathed more easily and his heart, though throbbing very fast, began to beat more regularly. The Holy Oils were quickly brought and he received the sacrament of Extreme Unction.*



*If unconscious at first, he grew conscious before the close of the rite, and before the last blessing was given, for he seized the priest's hand and drew it towards him. Then his speech came back for as the priest said to him;*

*'Do you know me? Can you speak? You are very, very ill, I have annointed you.'* 'Yes,' he answered, 'I know, I know, God bless you for that!'

*Then he began to fumble about his shoulder as if searching for something. It was his hood he sought. It had fallen from his shoulders. He found it and drew it over his head as he used to wear it long ago in the days when he recited the office in the choir at Ampleforth. Doubtless he had before his mind a picture of the hooded monk laid out for his burial, for after having himself fastened it, and folded it on his chest, he crossed his hands and lay quiet as a child.*

*'Who is your Confessor, shall I send for him,' he was asked. 'No! there is no neccessity. I was at confession four or five days ago. Kneel down,' he said, 'I will go to confession to you and you shall give me absolution.'*

*After receiving absolution he said; 'Do you think I dare take the Viaticum.' 'Yes God will surely give you this last grace, I will bring it to you immediately,' the priest answered.*

*He received with great and touching fervour, and when asked if they should pray aloud with him, he begged them to say one of the dear old Psalms which had been the daily companions of his life. Later Fr. Cummins came from St. Anne's to see him and gave him the special Benedictine Absolution for the hour of death. Doctor Mc Cann made his final visit. He briefly told Fr. Anderson he was beyond all human help. 'It is well! It is well! a thousand thanks doctor for all your kindness,' he answered quite loudly and unfalteringly.*

*Both the doctor and the priests retired into the next room for the patient was weary and wished to be alone. However almost immediately a hurried message called the doctor back. He returned at once and bade them come quickly. They entered the chamber of the dying, and kneeling around recited aloud the prayers for the dying. His spirit passed. He died as he would have wished it clothed in his habit as his Patron St. Benedict, scarcely having paused an hour from his work.*

*The funeral took place on Wednesday, 14th of March. He was buried at Aigburth. The crowds who attended the Requiem and who followed the body to the grave witnessed to the worth of the man and to the affection with which he was regarded."*

### **Fr. Robert Placid Corlett**



Fr. Robert Placid Corlett was born on the 21<sup>st</sup> December 1854 and Professed in 1874. His Missions were: Cleator 1882, St Mary's Warrington 1886, St Peter's Liverpool 1887-1893.

He was appointed Rector of St Peter's Seel Street after the death of Fr Anderton and continued to support and serve the Church for 10 years. The dawn of the new Century would have taken place during his time there. He already knew St Peter's well by being a Curate for 6 years at the Church, so he knew his Parishioners and the Church in general.

He was Sub-prior at Ampleforth from 1897 and had connections in the Church from the past. He was a nephew of Fr. William Placid Corlett who had served the church from 1834.

Fr. Corlett, described by his parishioners as a dramatic and passionate preacher. The present pulpit was erected in his honour to establish a place where he could be remembered after his passing.

*Image Copyright Liverpool Record Office*



The History of the Stained Glass windows during this time is difficult to trace. The Church may have had either plain glass or part stained glass windows during its construction, but the only drawing of the church from the exterior does not provide the detail of the windows.

The earliest contemporary photographs of the building are from 1926. Yet notes on the Stained Glass windows confirm that most of the Stained Glass windows bear the date 1903 and were unveiled on November 23<sup>rd</sup> 1903.

The 1926 photo's of St Peter's show that the windows at the rear of the Church were simple rectangular small lead lined windows with a semi-circle fan like top. Were these partly replaced by 1903?

The image on the right is from the 1926 collection and shows possibly the original window 'style'. There are later editions to the stained glass after this time, and yet again there are further editions to the stained glass after the war when parts of the windows were blown out.

*Image copyright Liverpool Record Office.*

Fr Corlett left St Peter's Seel Street in 1910 after 10 years of serving the Parish. However, only two years after he retired his position, he passed away suddenly on a voyage. Fr Corlett passed away on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 1912. He was only 58.

His Obituary stated that his death was sudden and that it came to a great shock to everyone who knew him as he was only 53. *Copyright plantana.org.uk:*

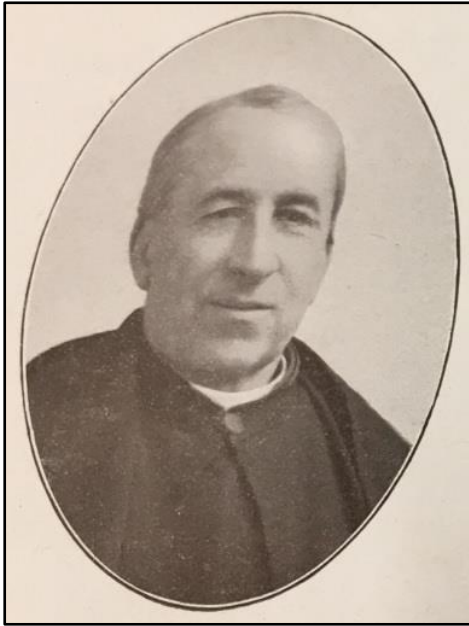
*"His death was so sudden and in such circumstances that it came as a great shock. He was returning from his holiday, and was on board ship in the Channel. On the Sunday night he was in the best of spirits and alive with all that exuberance of humour which characterized him.*

*On the Monday morning he arose, took his bath and returned to his cabin. There he was found later by the steward, unconscious. His fellow-priests were called; he was anointed, and died. Doctors were in attendance, but heart-failure was beyond their skill to touch.*

*His body was conveyed to Ampleforth, and rested before the altar in the monastery church where he had made his vows, where he had been ordained and said his first Mass; where, as a boy, he had prayed and received the Holy Sacraments often. The Dirge was chanted in the evening.*

*On the Thursday morning a solemn Requiem was sung by his brethren, and then he was laid in the ground to sleep in the quiet cemetery on the hill-side, in the midst of all those scenes wherein the years of his boyhood and early manhood had been passed: scenes that had been dear to him and wrought into his life many gracious and happy days. God rest the soul of an unworldly man and a good priest."*

### Fr. Joseph Anselm Wilson



Fr. Joseph Anselm Wilson was born on the 21<sup>st</sup> Oct 1855 in Bandon Cork. He was Clothed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1873 at Belm, professed on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 1874, Sol Professed on the 10<sup>th</sup> Nov 1877 and Ordained on the 4<sup>th</sup> Jun 1881. His missions were at: Liverpool P 1893, Liverpool P 1900, Liverpool P 1910, Dowlais 1917, Leyland 1926.

His missions were very much like Fr Corlett in the fact that he spent his time as a Curator at St Peter's before becoming the Rector.

During his time, questions were raised on the history of Chinatown in Liverpool as there were Chinese parishioners and friends and they were happy to provide the background to this question.

The Chinese community estimated that in 1904, there were about 100 Chinese settled in Liverpool, or at least using the town as a home port. If we go back to the Directory listings, there were 7 Chinese laundries listed but if we go back to the directories of 1927, there are about 107 in total. *Image Copyright Liverpool Record Office.*

Taken from the 'A Century and a Half, Notes on St Peter's' (*Copyright Liverpool Record Office*):

*"The First grouping seems to have been in Frederick Street, where at least three boarding houses existed before 1900, and in Liver Street. The spreading up Pitt Street came later when the first boarding house was opened by a well remembered host in 1902 or 1903. The first benevolent club was the Chung Yee Tong, which was a very great activity in charitable works. The first social club was at 70 Pitt Street and was later superseded by the Republic Reform Club founded by the well-known Lock Ah Tam, about 1916. It moved in to its present quarters in 1924. The first restaurant was opened in Forrest Street, in 1907. Other Clubs were the Sia Yip Association for laundry-men and the Khing jai for ships' cooks and stewards. The first Anglo-Chinese baby to be baptised at St Peter's was in 1906, though the first to be born in Liverpool is considered to be some twenty or so years earlier. "*

Fr Wilson left St Peter's Church in 1910 and continued his Missions until he passed away on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 1930 aged 75 at Leyland. He was buried at Brownedge.

His Obituary is partly described below (*Copyright plantata.org.uk*):

*"Towards the end of 1929 Fr Anselm's powers began to fail. His heart was affected and he had to withdraw from active work. For over eighteen months this condition remained. At times he seemed to be gaining strength, but the least exertion sent him back to bed. At midnight of Christmas 1929 he said Mass and spoke a few words of greeting to his flock. Their hopes, and his also, were raised that he might resume his work amongst them, but it was not to be. He had worn himself out and though he struggled manfully he came gradually to realize that his days were numbered. For some weeks before the end his body was at intervals racked with pain, which he bore with unflinching courage. The devoted attention of nurses and doctor helped to alleviate some of his sufferings. He prayed continuously and insisted on his friends praying with him. On the Tuesday before his death, he lost interest in the world around him and lay motionless till the Saturday morning, November 8th, when before the break of dawn his soul passed to its reward.*

*The funeral took place at Brownedge on Tuesday, November 11th, St Martin's feast. There was a large gathering of priests and laity. Fr Abbot sang the Requiem and Fr Hilary Willson, in a brief address, paid a loving tribute of appreciation to the character and work of his life-long friend. May he rest in Peace!"*



### Fr. Bernard John Gibbons

Fr Bernard Jon Gibbons was born on the 8<sup>th</sup> April 1863 in Wolverhampton. He was Clothed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1881, Professed on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 1882, Sol Professed on the 12<sup>th</sup> Jan 1886 and Ordained on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1889.

His missions were: Merthyr Tydvil 1895, Warrington A 1900, Canton Cardiff 1905, Liverpool P 1908, Leyland 1912, Liverpool P 1917, Clayton Green 1919, Grassendale 1927, Workington 1929, Grassendale 1929.

He served as a Rector of St Peter's for 3 years from 1917 to 1920 and had previous knowledge of the Church as being one of Fr. Corlett's assistants. Although only here for a short time, his character was obviously tested by the war years. Despite the testing times of the war, the parish was actually quite prosperous for a time and Fr Gibbons took full advantage of this by having the Church re-roofed. After only a short time, Fr Gibbons left the parish to serve at Clayton Green, of which he then moved to St Austin's Grassendale.

He lived till a good age – 88 – and died on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1951. Part of his obituary states *Copyright plantana.org.uk*:

*"For forty-five years from 1895 Fr Bernard worked in one or other of the parishes served from the Abbey. He was assistant at Merthyr Tydfil, at St Alban's, Warrington, St Mary's, Cardiff, and St Peter's, Liverpool. He was parish priest of Leyland, of St Peter's, Liverpool, and Clayton Green and, for the last eleven years of this period, of St Austen's, Grassendale, where he kept the Golden Jubilee of his priesthood. His care and kindness won for him the affection of his people in these various charges, as the letters to him in his old age, or written about him, have shown. In 1940 Fr Bernard retired to the monastery broken in health, and suffering much. It was said of him that one hardly ever entered his room but to find him praying, or reading some spiritual book. His devotion to the Psalms and study of them was a marked feature of his life. In outdoor pursuits he had loved gardening, and he was an accomplished skater.*

*An incident of his early life may be told here, in illustration of his character. Before entering the novitiate he went to ask for the blessing of Bishop Ullathorne, a family friend and the Ordinary of his native diocese. 'So you have been at Ampleforth, and are wanting to join the community. I never got any good out of Ampleforth,' was the Bishop's unpropitious greeting. The young man was annoyed, and boldly said, 'Whose fault was that, my Lord?' 'I suppose it was my own', the old man answered humbly. Very few people could claim to have got the better of the grand old Bishop, a rather formidable personage at times. (It should be explained that as a young monk the Bishop had been lent by Downside to Ampleforth when it had been nearly ruined by the exodus of the Superiors and many boys in 1830 to Prior Park. It was a difficult time, and there was trouble for the new prefect, Br Bernard Ullathorne.)*

*More than once in his last years, Fr Bernard was at the point of death. In the evening of Corpus Christi this year he was plainly so near the end that he received Holy Viaticum for the last time, and died a few hours later. His brother, Canon Gibbons of Birmingham, and his nephew, Paul Gibbons, were at Ampleforth for the Dirge and Requiem. R.I.P. "*

### Fr. Basil Primavesi



Fr Basil Primavesi was born on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 1874 in Swansea. He was Clothed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1892 at Belm, professed on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 1893, Sol. Professed on the 11<sup>th</sup> June 1897, Ordained on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 1900. His missions were: Warrington M 1902, Liverpool Ann 1915, Cockermouth 1918, Liverpool P 1920.

He arrived at the Church when change occurred. Many of the older ways of the Church had passed over and there was new change on the horizon in the area surrounding the Church, as well as the Church activities too. He was to organise the first successful Grand Bazaar, and this came just before the national slump. The area around the Church was also to change. Older Parishioners were passing away, the families were moving out of town and the first block of Municipal flats in the Parish were about to appear.

The Church was also under threat of demolition by a great fire which seemed likely to cross Back Seel Street. *(Image Copyright Liverpool Records Office)*

It was noted that Fr. Basil woke from his sleep and upon seeing and hearing the great fire, went down and placed a medal of St Benedict on the Church wall. A sudden change of wind followed – whether by luck or greater invention and the fire was taken away by the Church.

Fr Primavesi died on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 1937 and his passing was noted in his Obituary: *Copyright plantana.org.uk*:

*“Cardinal Manning, in his great book The Eternal Priesthood, says that the death of a fervent priest, though it may be sudden, is never unprepared. These words are a consolation to us who are mourning the loss of Reginald Basil Primavesi, monk of St Benedict and priest of Jesus Christ. To him death came with an awful suddenness, without apparent warning, swiftly, in the silence of midnight. Up to a late hour on Tuesday he appeared to be in normal health - conversing, jesting, laughing with his brethren; on Wednesday morning his body was found stretched lifeless and cold across his bed. He, who in the exercise of his priestly ministry had been so assiduous in his service of the sick, and had succoured and consoled so many souls in their passage to eternity, was destined to die alone, unfortified by those holy rites which God in his mercy has given to the Church to blunt death's sting.*

*But, after all, it is not from a sudden death merely that holy Church prays the Lord to deliver us, but rather from a death which, besides being sudden, is also unprovided: 'a subitanea et improvisa morte libera nos Domine.' And when we review the life and work and character of Father Basil, and strive to penetrate the motives of his deeds and conduct, we cannot fail to experience a holy confidence that the good God, who decreed for him this sudden passage to eternity, found him not unprepared for the great journey. For if ever there was a priest to whom was applicable the word 'fervent,' that priest was Father Basil.*

*Father Basil was sixty-three years of age. His father was an Italian, whose family came from the shores of Lake Como; his mother was Welsh; and he himself was born in South Wales. His school days were spent at Ampleforth. He joined the monastic community there, and consecrated himself to God by the holy vows of religion. For his ecclesiastical studies he was sent to Rome, where his closest friend and fellow-student was Father Cuthbert Jackson, whom God called, a few months ago, from earthly darkness into eternal light.*

*In 1900 Father Basil was ordained to the priesthood. After a brief period of teaching in the Abbey School, he was sent to take part in that extra-claustral missionary work which has been entrusted to the English Benedictine Congregation by the Holy See. He served for many years as an assistant priest at St Mary's, Warrington. From 1915 to 1918 he was an assistant priest at St Anne's, Liverpool, with Father McDonald, the present Archbishop of Edinburgh, as his superior. He was then given charge of the parish of Cockermouth in Cumberland. In 1920 he was transferred as Rector to St Peter's, Liverpool; and there he remained until he died (as I think he would have wished to die) in the midst of the flock whom for so many years he had loved and served.”*

## The Grand Bazaar



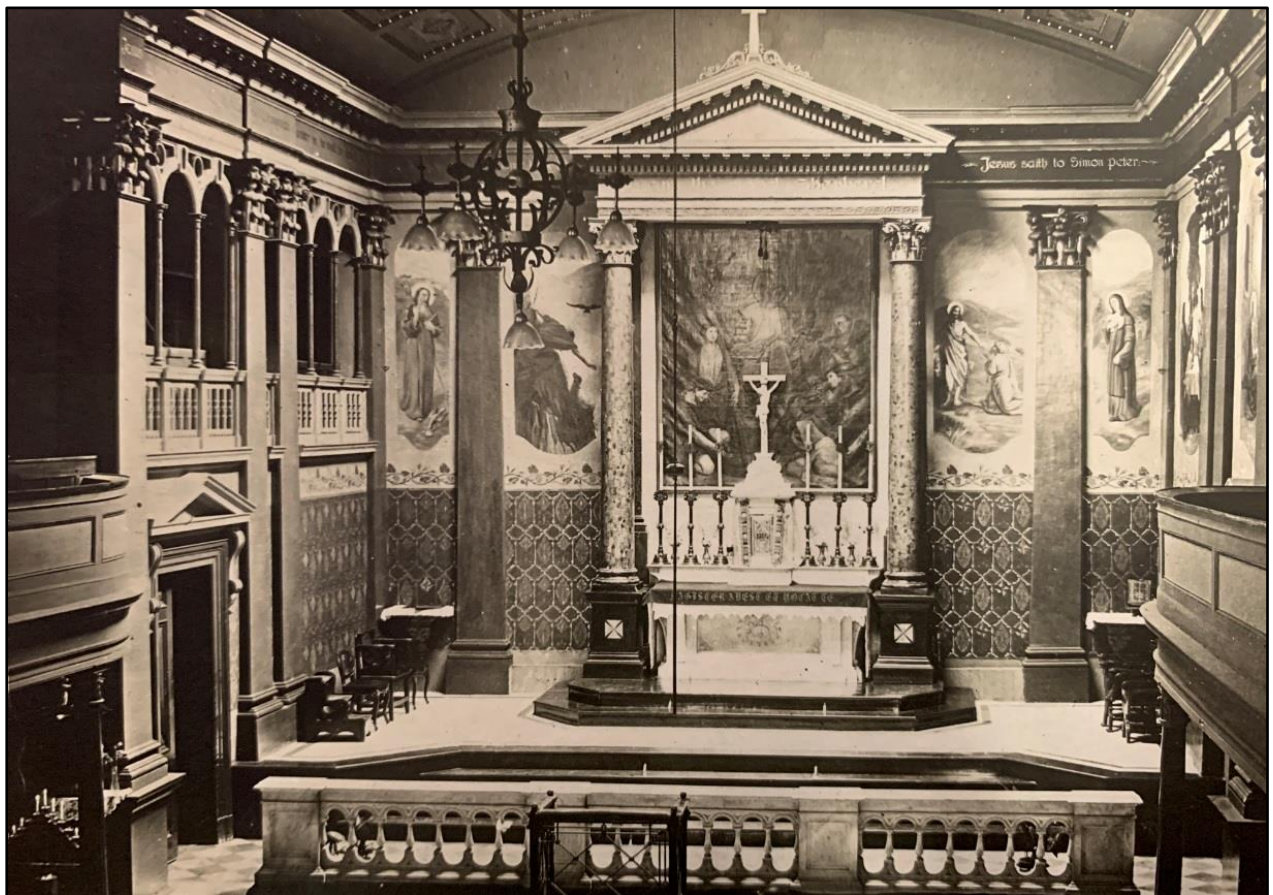
Above is the Official Handbook of the St Peter's Seel Street Grand Bazaar. This was to be held in St Peter's Seel Street on October the 14,15, 16, 1920. The price of the Handbook was one shilling.

Why was the Bazaar held? It was held for several reasons – but simply to raise money: (Above images copyright *Liverpool Record Office*)

- The Church of St Peter's Seel Street, the Oldest Catholic Church in Liverpool, is being completely re-decorated, and Electric Light is being installed.
- It will entail an outlay of several hundred pounds.
- Much must be done to the Priory also to make it thoroughly habitable.
- The Schools will, likewise, require money spending on them.
- The present population 2,600 as against 14,000 in the forties of the nineteenth century, is not a wealthy congregation.
- The encroaching tide of trade has caused good residential quarters to be converted into warehouses, and many of our parishioners have been unwillingly forced to leave us. We feel that their love for St Peter's gives us a claim to their help.
- Our Bazaar, postponed through the illness of the great Rector, will take place on October the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, 1920, in St Peter's School, Seel Street, Liverpool.
- We shall be grateful for any help, either in money or kind. This help is urgently and immediately needed.
- Will our friends and well-wishers also kindly interest their friends in our behalf and so help to make the Bazaar a success.

### Contemporary views of St Peter's Seel Street.

Before we look to review the next Fr. in a long line of Rectors, we must review the available contemporary images at this time, and we start with the earliest internal view of the Church from 1920:



The View towards the Altar – 1920 – *Copyright Liverpool Record Office*. On the Altar states 'I am the Good Shepherd'. This wording is visible in the image and this wording survives till at least 1932.



The below image shows the inscription on the Altar as Christ The King. These words were still in place for the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Church. It is not known when the words were changed again to TU ES PETRUS (You are Peter).



The View towards the Altar – 1926 – *Copyright Liverpool Record Office*



Showing the interior layout of the rear of the Church with the Font area and statues. 1926. *Copyright Liverpool Record Office.*



### 150th Celebrations of St Peter's Seel Street

The 19<sup>th</sup> June 1938 was a very special day in the Calendar of St Peter's Seel Street, for on this date, the Church celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday. This was a grand occasion for such a small church in a remote part of the city and to reach its 150<sup>th</sup> birthday was a fantastic achievement. Archbishop Downey was in charge for this one and the Jubilee mass was celebrated in style. Hundreds of people visited the Church during this time and the local streets were decorated with banners/flowers and bunting, such was an occasion in the local area.



1938 – 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Seel Street. *Copyright Liverpool Record Office. (above and below)*







1938 – 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Seel Street. *Copyright Liverpool Record Office. (Above and below)*







1938 – 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Seel Street. *Copyright Liverpool Record Office.*

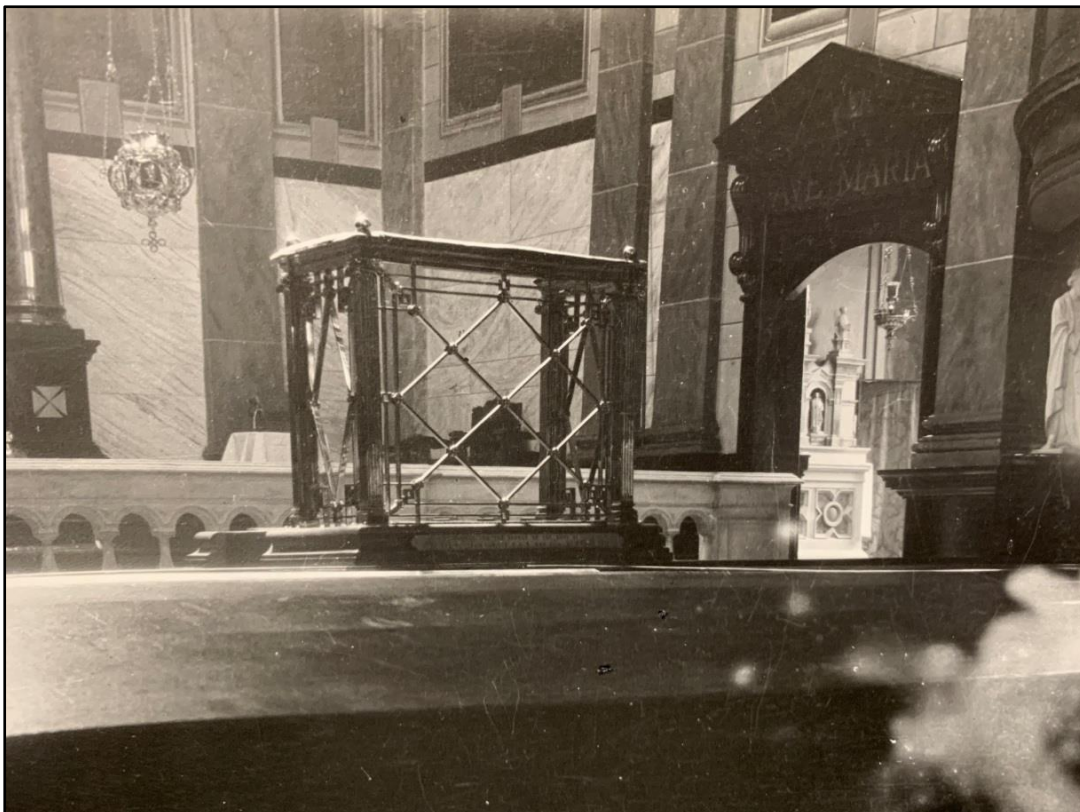


1938 – showing the Seel Street St Peter's Gardens (across the road from St Peter's Church) *Copyright Liverpool Record Office.*





1939 – A further view (above) of the St Peter's Seel Street Gardens. (St Peter's Church is on the right-hand side)  
*Copyright Liverpool Record Office.*



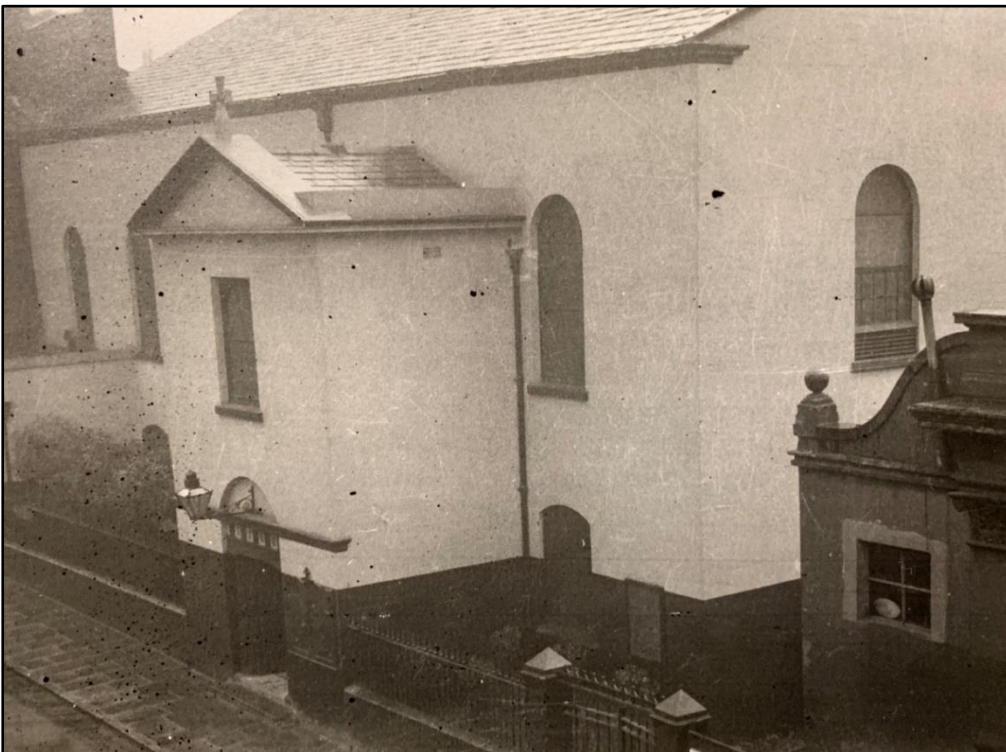
On the left shows an interior shot of St Peter's Chancel with the Pulpit in the centre facing the congregation.

The image gives a glimpse of the Lady Chapel on the right.

Image – 1938  
 – *Copyright Liverpool Record Office*



The entrance to St Peter's Seel Street – 1938 – *Copyright Liverpool Record Office.*



The exterior view of St Peter's Seel Street in 1939.

This picture shows the rear of the Church and shows details of the original windows before stained glass was added to some of them.

*Copyright Liverpool Record Office.*



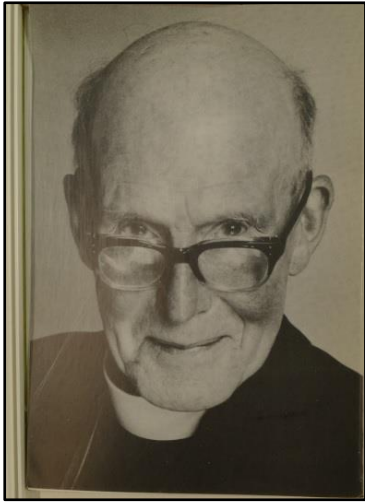


The above picture shows Seel Street in 1938. It shows a rare view of 78 Seel Street (St Peter's School) with the railings in front of the property. Currently, the road had been untouched by World War 2 and was still in its original form.

The building in the centre is the former Presbyterian house at no 76 Seel Street. At this time, the interior would have been greatly changed to incorporate the Altar, but from viewing the external image, there is no trace of this looking into the property.

On the right-hand side is St Peter's Seel Street. It shows the extension to the Church of which the white extension was named as St Anthony's Chapel. History does not recall when this part of the building was demolished but it was there after the war. It was part of the Church and not an extension of the presbytery but for what purpose? This was demolished when Urban Splash took over the building. It is not noted why this part of the building was demolished. *Copyright Liverpool Record office.*

## Fr. Herbert Byrne



*Above image of Fr Byrne, copyright ampleforthjournal.org*

*Image (Right) of Fr Hesketh copyright of plantata.org.uk*

Fr Byrne adapted to the Parish very quickly. He was seen to take up the 'outdoor collection' to assist the Church in the public houses at the weekend purely to swell the coffers and yet he had time for the parishioners in the district. It was stated that he preferred to watch Mass with his fellow parishioners and knelt with them side by side so he could see for himself what it was like to take Mass. He was quoted as saying 'In an average congregaton, 10 percent of people use books, twenty percent have beads, the smaller wiggle unhappily and the larger lean heavily on the bench rail'.

Fr Byrne was only at St Peter's for less than 6 years but left his mark on the Church in his own way. He returned to Ampleforth to face new issues there. In the summer of 1978 it was clear that he was not well. He could see little, and was in constant discomfort and in august he suffered a slight stroke. He passed away on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1978 and was buried at Ampleforth.

### Small Notes on St Peter's before the War Years.

A note or two must be mentioned on the brief notes that Fr Primavesi made during his time there.

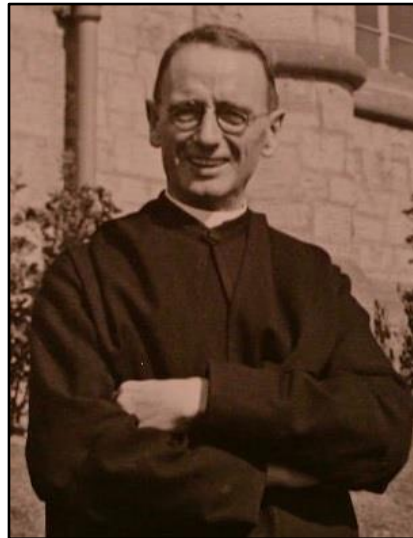
'The Stained Glass windows in St Peter's.' (*Copyright - Taken directly from A Century and a Half – Notes on St Peter's*).

On the Gospel side (1) St Peter, (in memory of the Davey family); (2) The Sacred Heart (of the Nodwell family); (3) St Lawrence (of Fr. Alexius Eager, O.S.B). In the gallery (5 and 6) The Assumption and the Coronation B.V.M. (in commoration of the Silver Jubilee of Frs. Corlett and Wilson). On the Epistle side (7) St. Joseph (in memory of William and Margaret Crangle); The Annunciation (of Peter Grant and his son Peter RIP); (8) St Patrick (of Fr. Anderson and Fr. Vincent Murphy); (9) The Baptism in the Jordan (in memory of a friend).

In the Gallery (10) St. John (of J. J. Fitzpatrick); (11) The Nativity (of John Gerritts). At the end of the Church (12) St Cecilia (of Margaret Gordon – RIP); (13) S.E. corner, 'Suffer the little Children', and in the porch (14) Christ the King.

Fr. Kevin Herbert Byrne was born on the 7<sup>th</sup> Sep 1884 in Rock Ferry. He was Clothed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sep 1902, professed on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sep 1903, Sol. Professed on the 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 1906 and Ordained on the 25<sup>th</sup> May 1911. His missions were at Helmsley 1927-35, Liverpool P 1935, Liverpool P 1938, Leyland 1963.

Fr. Byrne's tenure was after the death of Fr Primavesi as Rector; however, he had served at St Peter's Seel Street in 1935. By 1937 he was installed as Rector and inducted on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1937. Fr. Byrne had two assistants during his time, this were Fr's Clement Hesketh and Louis J d'Andria.



**Fr Raymond Clement Hesketh** was born on the 20<sup>th</sup> Nov 1888 in Liverpool. He was Clothed on the 5<sup>th</sup> October 1907, professed on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1908, Sol. Professed on the 6<sup>th</sup> Jan 1912 and Ordained on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 1917. His Missions were Liverpool P 1937, Workington 1938, Horsforth 1947.

**Louis D'Andria** was born on the 12<sup>th</sup> August 1880 in Bradford and was Clothed on the 5<sup>th</sup> Oct 1909, professed on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1910, Sol. Professed on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1914, Ordained on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 1916. His Missions were Brindle 1925, Dowlais 1926, Liverpool P 1941.



## Priests at St Peter's

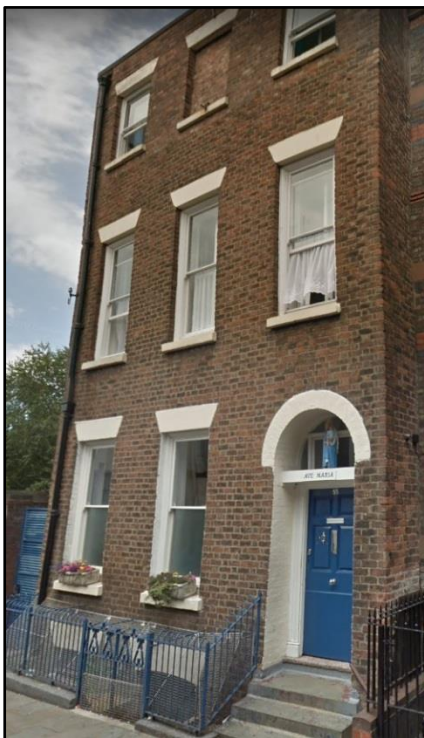
The following information has been taken directly from (*Copyright - A Century and a Half – Notes on St Peter's*). It provides a list in Alphabetical Order of all serving Priests at St Peter's with their start/end date.

Alexander, Romuald -	1921
Anderson, P. Maurus -	1858-1863, (Rector 1874-1900)
Appleton, J. Francis -	Rector 1841-1847
Barnes, J. Laurence -	1790-1796
Barry, D. Francis -	1865-1869
Blackwell, Francis -	1930
Bonney, T. Benedict -	1844-1847, (Rector 1847-1864)
Brown, J. Idelphonsus -	Rector 1872-1874
Brown, M. Wilfrid -	1874-1876
Buisseret, Gregory -	1927-1928
Byrne, Herbert K -	1935-1937 (Rector 1937)
Calderbank, James -	1808-1809
Caldwell, G. Alban -	1832-1834
Caldwell, J. Bernard -	1864-1865 (1865-1866)
Carew, J. Maurus -	1900-1901, 1906-1908
Cooper, R. Wilfred -	1863-1864
Corlett, R. Placid -	1887-1893, 1898-1900, (Rector 1900-1910)
Corlett, W. Placid -	1834-1836
Croft, R. Clement -	1840-1841
Crow, F. Aiden -	1902-1903
Cummins, J. Ildephonsus	1885-1887
D'Andria, Louis J -	1930
Davey, W. Augustine -	1854-1864 (Rector 1864-1865)
Dawson, R. Aelfred -	1912-1913
Dewhurst, J. Ignatius -	1851-1858
Digby, W. Jerome -	1796-1808
Dillon, W. Placid -	1869-1871
Eager, W. Alexius -	1889-1898
Flanagan, J. Dunstan -	1887
Gibbons, B. John -	1908-1912 (Rector 1917-1920)
Glover, V. Joseph -	1816-1835 (Rector 1835-1838)
Guy, R. Ephrem -	1864-1869
Hall, J. Placid -	1884-1885
Hankinson, M. Adrian -	1851-1854
Hayes, A. Benedict -	1924-1926
Hayes, V. Leo -	1915-1924
Hesketh, R. Clement -	1937
Hind, T. Austin -	1914-1915
Hutchinson, F. Bernard -	1878-1881
Jackson, T Benard -	1843-1845
Lythgoe, F. Raymund -	1920-1921
Macdonald, A. Benedict	Rector 1788-1814
Margison, T. Maurus -	1840-1843, 1847-1851
Murphy, J. Benedict -	1864
Murphy, H. Gregory -	1884
Murphy, T. Vincent -	1881-1889
Newton, Francis -	1919
O'Neill, C. Oswald -	1871-1874
Phillipson, Wilfrid -	1878-1884
Pope, Richard -	1789-1790
Pratt, R. Ephrem -	Rector 1838-1841
Prest, R. Ambrose -	1828-1832
Price, C. Wilfrid -	1850-1851
Primavesi, A. Francis -	1928-1935

Primavesi, R. Basil -	Rector 1920-1937
Richardson, Alphonsus -	1925-1930
Robinson, T. Gregory -	1815-1816 (Rector 1816-1835), 1835-1837
Ryan, G. Stephen -	1910-1918, 1921-1926
Scannell, Anselm -	1886-1887
Scarlsbrick, W. Benedict	Rector 1886-1872
Schneider, Finton -	1920
Shepherd, T. Maurus -	1851
Sinnott, M. Plaicid -	1836-1838
Smith, T. Cuthbert -	1844
Smith, C. Gregory -	1869-1870
Snow, T. Benedict -	1870-1878
Spain, H. Leo -	1814-1815
Standish, J. Clement -	1898-1900
Swale, J. Bede -	1847-1850
Talbot, J. Benedict -	1877-1878
Tarleton, W. Dunstan	1809-1814 (Rector 1814-1816)
Thomas, J. Basil -	1845
Turner, G. Romuald -	1877-1878
Turner, T. Theodore -	1904-1906
Walker, T. Anselm -	1845-1847
Willson, J. Philip -	1900
Wilson, J. Anselm -	1893-1898, 1900-1910, (Rector 1910-1917)
Wilson, N. Vincent -	1884-1885
Worsley, J. Clement -	1837-1840

## 55 Seel Street

In 1845, as stated above, a major extension takes place on the Church building. No 76 Seel Street, a building used to house the Priests for over 60 years, is extended into and the building becomes less of a building, designed for its purpose, and more of an extension to the Church. The building is literally half the size of the original footprint and this made the building unsuitable for its needs. Therefore the Priests were transferred across the road to no 55 Seel Street.



English Heritage does not record the listing of 55 Seel Street. However, it does provide a listing of 45-51 Seel Street which are nearly identical, and it is this we take the listing directly from English Heritage. (*Copyright historicengland.org.uk*) –

*Late C18. Brick with stone dressings, slate roof. 3 storeys with basement, 2 bays to each house except No. 47. Windows have wedge lintels and are sashed, most have glazing bars. Round-headed entrances are paired. No. 45 has boarded ground floor window and iron area railings. No. 47 is plastered, of 3 bays and has wooden blind boxes; iron area railings. Nos. 49 and 51 have panel doors.*

While the building was in an ideal place opposite St Peter's Church, it would have felt like home to the Fr's. They would have a direct view of the Church and would have literally only have to cross the road to gain access to the Church. Next to 55 Seel Street were St Peter's Gardens, a private enclosed area for use by the Church as and when required. It is difficult to imagine in the present day that this was used for contemplation and for Church activities in a peaceful setting. However, quite how quiet the peace would have been is debatable seeing as there was an Iron Foundry listed next door on the 1892-1914 map!

*Image copyright googlemaps.com*





A view of Seel Street in 1938 showing the St Peter's Gardens and 55 Seel Street on the right hand side of the street. This is showing the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of the Church. *Copyright Liverpool Record Office.*



An 1938 view of the St Peter's Seel Street Gardens with 55 Seel Street on the right hand side. This was a private enclosed space for the use of St Peter's Church. *Copyright Liverpool Records Office.*





A 1939 view of St Peter's Gardens, on the left is 55 Seel Street, centre picture is 76 Seel Street and on the right is St Peter's Church. *Copyright Liverpool Record Office.*



The image left shows the bomb damage of 55 Seel Street in 1941. It is not known whether there were any casualties from this bombing as the top floor of the building has been heavily damaged.

*Image  
Copyright  
Liverpool  
Records  
Office.*



## ST PETER'S CHURCH – THE WAR YEARS

The second World War lasted from 1939 to 1945 and hundreds of books and documents have been recorded on the war, and the impact on the war for the UK. However, the Liverpool Blitz which took place between 1940-1942 was the most sustained bombing of a city outside of London. As Liverpool at the time still had the largest port on the west coast, and was instrumental to the British war effort. The Port of Liverpool had direct links and trade with North America and would prove a key station for the Battle of the Atlantic.

Although bombs fell in the country from more or less the start of the war, it was Liverpool's turn in August 1940 when over 160 bombers attacked the city on the 28<sup>th</sup> August. The assault on the city was over 3 nights of heavy bombing which caused destruction far and wide in the city. Further to this, the bombing campaign was a regular part of life for the remainder of the year.

The Christmas blitz took place in December 1940 where hundreds of people were killed just before Christmas from sustained bombing campaigns. However, it would take the May Blitz of 1941 for the city to take the heaviest bombing out of any other city (apart from London) which took place over 7 days. This involved 681 bombers, and 2,315 high explosive bombs. It caused mass destruction across the city and many noted buildings were damaged or completely bombed. Liverpool Cathedral was hit and caused damage to many stained glass windows. St Luke's Church on Leece Street was 'bombed out', as well as 30 James Street (White Star Line), the Custom House, Bluecoat Chambers and Liverpool Museum were amongst the heaviest casualties.



The above and below pictures (*Copyright wikipedia.com*) shows the devastation in the Liverpool Blitz. The photographer has selected a view of the main town centre. The Victoria monument in the foreground was undamaged, the road on the left is Lord Street and the road in the centre of the picture South Castle Street. On the horizon, one can see the remains of the Custom House.

Out of all the buildings, some were demolished as they were beyond saving. Some were brought back in to use, and there was one which was left as a memorial to the War. St Luke's Church.





The above image taken in 1938, shows the original stained glass windows of St Peter's Church. This is the front view of the Church from the Seel Street side and is believed to be the only stained glass image pre world war 2. *Copyright Liverpool Record Office.*

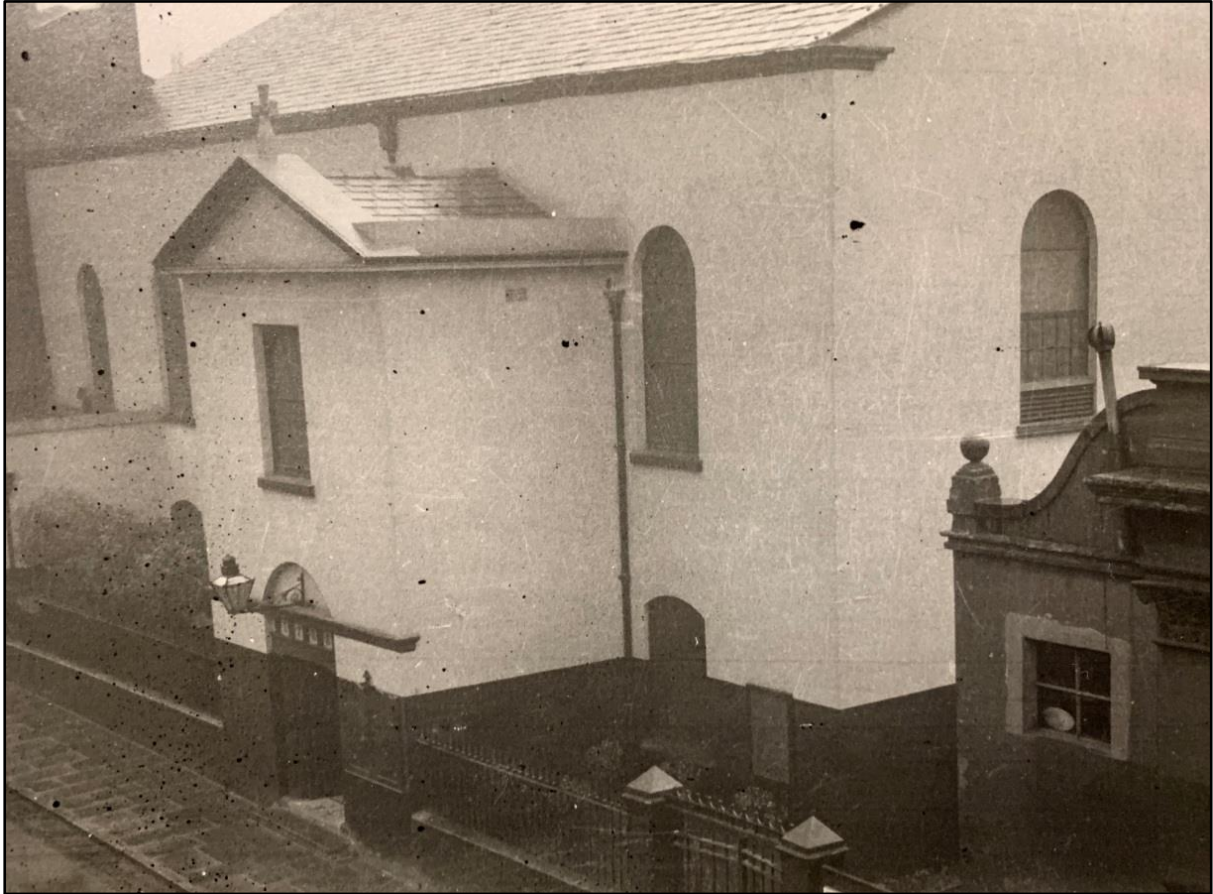


The image to the left shows the entrance to the Church in 1940. It shows that the Church is still 'open' currently and still functioning as a Church. There appears to be no bomb damage in the photograph, and one wonders whether this was the calm before the storm.

The tranquil area of Seel Street, almost rural in its early years would be in the catchment area of the bombing of Liverpool's port, yet by sheer luck, while there was surround damage to other properties in the area, some of great importance, St Peter's Seel Street did not take a direct bombing as such, and apart from stained glass damage and some roof damage, the building did not take a direct hit.

The Church at the time would have been 152 years old at the time and a well-known feature in the area. It is by complete fortune that the building still survives to this day and can still open in the original format via the entrance chamber and one can view the history of the building internally and externally. *Copyright Liverpool Record Office.*





The above image of St Peter's is possibly the last image of the complete view of the building with its original windows in situ. Taken in 1938, it shows the original rear windows and the stained glass. *Copyright Liverpool Record Office.*



The image on the left shows the only known image of the interior of the building with its original stained glass still in situ.

Taken in 1941, this would have been just before the Liverpool Blitz and sadly the windows of the church would not remain.

*Copyright Liverpool Record Office.*

Louis Joseph D'Andria an Ampleforth Benedictine Monk, was a curate in St Peter's from 1930 to 1945. He was instrumental in recording the history of St Peter's during the War Years. When he arrived in 1930, the Parish was an inner city, working class parish. There was also a diverse population from all backgrounds as migrants from many countries had settled in the area over the years due to the Port of Liverpool being suitable for trade, work or passing through the town.

It was during the Liverpool Blitz that both Fr. Bruno Dawson and Fr Louis D'Andria noted the history of the building during the war, as well as the effects on the Parish. We are indebted to Fr. D'Andria who carefully recorded the history of the building in a series of letters to Fr Kevin Herbert Byrne, the then Abbot of Ampleforth and these letters were written up to the Liverpool May Blitz. It was not just a note on the history of the building, but it was a note to provide information on the dangerous times ahead. Both Fr. Byrne and Fr D'Andria were good friends from their time served at St Peter's previously. Byrne had served there from 1935 and was installed as Rector in 1937 so he knew the Parish well. It is the most complete recorded history during the war years at St Peter's and yet it told a sad time of the Church, and of a city under threat by World War 2.

These early letters were jovial at the start, the impending danger of the blitz could not be calculated at the time – it was an unknown occurrence that would have had devastating impacts on the city, its buildings and its people.

D'Andria noted that the Church was largely unaffected when it came to the services during this time, and kept as a strict time of the services as best possible. While there was no midnight mass celebrated at Christmas 1939, other services still took place with the Latin Mass of the Tridentine rite, regular confessions were still heard, Benediction, The Rosary, and during Lent, The Stations of the Cross.

However, D'Andria provided these notes and letters for one specific reason. He was a Historian and wanted to record his time at the Church, especially of such a terrible time, and record these notes for future reference. He was meticulous in his records and notes. Even more so when at Christmas 1940, the last edition of the Seel Street Chronicle appeared. The Father would also record the trivial every day life of the Church during this time to give the full picture. It wasn't just the building he cared about, but the Parish and the Parishioners. These records were deposited with Ampleforth Abbey but the Liverpool Record Office took copies of these letters and transcribed them for their own text.

For complete clarity and to record history, these letters below have been directly recorded from '*Coping with the Blitz, St Peter's Seel Street Liverpool 1940-41*'.

### Letter 1

*D'Andria to Fr. Abbot Byrne 26<sup>th</sup> January 1940. 55 Seel Street, Liverpool.*

"Dear Father Abbot,

It is snowing and the old typewriter is looking at me pathetically as though wanting exercise, - quite like an irrational human being. Hence this otherwise superfluous letter. This is a kindly warning in case you are busier than usual.

I have nothing much to say, but can dig up an anny (sic) goat or two about some of your old friends. For instance, a little while ago I saw a khaki clad figure striding down Seel St. with a very alert and military air. I blinked in surprise, it was Walter Carroll. Talking with Leo recently I told him of a narrow escape when after meeting an ex club boy in the street and after him a final refusal by him to return, I brought his badge back from him and next day he appeared in Dale Street (Magistrates Court). Leo trumped this by saying that without being a server one morning he twice rejected the offer of a parishioner to serve, the latter walked out after devoutly hearing mass into the arms of two policemen waiting for him at the Church door. You may be wondering how this fate of Charlie, as Leo calls him, concerns you; but when I add that Leo continued, 'he was quite mad; he used to write me letters addressed to That Living Saint' asking for financial help, you will realise that it was the last public appearance of poor old 'Eanie'.

Talking of remoter days, Mr Scully told me that after mounting the roof of the Lady Chapel, he was certain that the tradition of it having been once the housekeeper's room, had a fundermental in i.e, there being definate traces of domestic architecture. I made a note of his data, for the use of some future historian. Which reminds me that some officious journalist removed my carefully poised bushel and put a paragraph in the 'Post' about my photos, which were again on exhibition. This wouldn't have mattered if the Catholic press hadn't copied and



garbled it so that it appeared that I had presented a series of valuable old historical prints to the city. I am now being asked for copies of my new book!

Chad, will give you a more or less accurate account of events - deaths, sickness, the cold etc. Velarde, who is just back from York and Hull, says it is intense in your parts. Here it makes one think of the retreat from Moscow, and in its worst moments faintly recalls the horrors of Dowlais. But I will warn you against one of my colleague's favourite libels - that I startled the Children's service one Sunday by opening with the oratorical allusion 'What did St Paul say in 46'? Of course this was my own neat summary when asked by the bretherton at tea about the subject of my discourse. I had referred to the epistle for the day and he told the Children that St. Paul would not have described their behaviour in Church as a pattern for all Achaia. I need not say that I am daily set the task by my bretherton of proving the absolute accuracy of my statements - an easy but incessant and monotonous labour.

Another anny goat. One Sunday afternoon I came across a man and a woman fighting in Pitt St. It was impossible to ignore it, and so I strode up with what I hoped was a determined air, (to impress the onlookers who were at a very safe distance). Wondering what I could possibly do. When I was within a few yards and wishing they were miles, an excellent Chinese 'deus ex machina', rushed out of Schorah's shop, flung his arms around the man's neck, and shouting 'stop', jerked his head nearly off and led him away. I turned away as the onlookers closed in, but not before I heard one of them say to the Amazon. (and this is whatever point the story has), 'you shouldn't strike a man Nellie, it doesn't look nice'.

I always knew that St Nicholas was most relably helpful, so I was not surprised when half a dozen long delay problems were solved on the morning of December 6<sup>th</sup>. But I thought that a victory over York House in a league match that night was really too much to ask him for, so I would be satisfied with a credible defeat, our boys being all (i.e. the players) under 16 while theirs were 18. And we smashed them completely winning all five games at billiards (75 up). Barney Doogan of Ashcrofts walked about chuckling and repeating 'Beaten them by 229'. As our team will be avaiable for three more years, prospects are good. The club is rather flourishing in numbers and performance. We have twenty to thirty over school age and they all do gym. Pilkington is much pleased and has introduced a new type of exercice every week.

Talking about having faith, someone told me last Saturday morning that I had urged her to have faith and do something she was not bound to do. After long hesitation she had done it and had come to say how happy she was. Lest I should be puffed up, she was followed by almost inaudible, who ignored my entreaties to raise her voice. I was about to give up when I caught the implicatory phrase 'using instruments' so I had to perservere. After long effort I discovered that she was advising me to obtain one of those mechanical aids for the deaf.

Now I have got going there are lots of things I would like to say, but it is close on 7. So you are spared.

With all best wishes for the coming year.

Yours obediently,

Is it in order to say that I am grateful that I was not involved in the recent changes?

## Letter 2

55 Seel Street, Liverpool 7<sup>th</sup> Feb 1940.

Dear Father Abbot,

In a recent note to you, I threatened a further communication, which by way of ushering in the penitential season, I am now perpetrating. I may, however, begin (for I see from my Chinese calendar that tomorrow is the first day of the first moon) a happy new year, or if you prefer it, may the lotus of your happiness expand in the lake of prosperity. Talking about lakes, our fishpond bears, for I saw Fr Bruno walk across it, but the ice is too rough for skating. On the same subject, the snow trampled on into a frozen mass has made our parish almost untraversable, especially after dark. I never expected to welcome rain, but the last day or two have turned the surface into slush, which is an improvement. One could draw a politico-social moral from the far side of park Lane as I experienced it yesterday. The side-walk all around Employment Exchange with its large gilt notice

'National Service' was ankle deep in melting snow, while those around Dunlop's and other neighbouring blocks devoted to selfish capitalist enterprises were swept clean.

Remarkable as it may seem, I have strayed from the subject, which was to have been a reply to your question about the cause of the renaissance of the Boys' Club. I thought the answer would be sufficiently interesting and possibly useful enough to replay analysis. Thinking it over, I attribute it to three main causes. One – Paid and permanent leader and caretaker. Fr. Bruno said this was essential. I agreed of course, but said it was financially impossible. He said 'pay them ten shillings a week and 10% on the takings and I will remit the rent for a time' This meant paying £26 a year instead of £18, but I had just received £4.12 from the education authorities, so I tried it. I got four men to share the job at 2/6 each. In a month or two they reduced themselves to two at 5/- each – Tom O' Neill and Will Connolly, who have remained ever since and become keenly interested in the work. The former opens the club about noon (there are mornings and afternoon classes and the Education people pay for the fire) and the latter comes after his day's work. Their presence is of course only part of their value: They have a good and stimulating influence.

Two – numbers. Fr. Bruno said the club should be confined to boys who had left school or were about to leave. I admitted the idea but showed that it had been impracticable in the past. There were barely a dozen members as a result. So he gave me a free hand. I announced in the school that the club would be opened to standards 7,6 and 5. At the first meeting, about 60 boys came, roughly 20 from each. In a month about 20 had left. The idea was to raise the entry age by one standard each year. Meanwhile, those who stayed put so much life into the club that boys who had left school were attracted – especially elder brothers. With these numbers it was easy to organise 'Houses' etc. So instead of closing down as usual during the summer, the club grew in numbers and activity all the time. Long 'hikes' of 10 to 20 miles with O'Neill became popular.

The third cause is more interesting. It was Oman in his recent book 'On the Writing of History' calls cataclysmal – his word for an unpredictable change. It is simply that we have struck a patch of decent boys. Two patches, to be accurate. One about a dozen fifteen, and half year olds and another – last year's standard six, now about thirteen and half years, more than a dozen. The latter are mostly altar servers and 'men of May' i.e. they were present at the first meeting (May 7<sup>th</sup>) and rather proud of it and of the precedent it confers. Anyway the change is almost incredible, when I recall former days. There has not been a single instance, not a single one of wilful damage or riotous behavior since May. Nine out of ten pay their subs promptly – the exceptions are either newcomers, who drop away or old hands like the Prestons, who preserve old traditions.

One effect of all of this is that I have time and opportunity to talk with individuals. Yesterday, for instance, a 16 year old having some grievance, came at my invitation to discuss things, and after half an hour went away feeling important, with the impression that he had learnt a great deal about the difficulties of managing a club, at least he said so, adding firm resolutions to the future. I don't know whether all this conveys a definite impression of the general atmosphere of success and satisfaction, which seems to me to pervade the club. I have now and again reports of remarks by boys. They stated that they have been in several clubs and couldn't settle down, but now couldn't imagine my life without this one.

The future is not cloudless. Externally St Vincent's have taken the large premises of the former Boy's Home in St George's Square with Fr. Gildea in charge. Internally – well, the improvement of the club synchronised with a decline of the Scouts. They gradually drifted into the club (without improving it) I was sorry for Browne after all his efforts and we discussed the situation. But the position was impossible. He did not complain but held that the scouts job is a full time job, which of course it is on scout principles. We arranged that he was to carry on with two days a week. I was to help as far as I could. I felt that he would keep to the agreement as we had done all along. I only feared what some future assistant or successor would do. This fear was increased by an interview with McAdam. Appleton's former helper, who was back on a visit. He roundly condemned the boys' clubs and extolled Scouts.

Then Browne received an offer of a higher post in the Scout world, which meant his resignation of the Seel Street command. He was kind enough to assure Fr. Bruno and myself that this was the only reason for leaving us. I was secretly relieved. After all, a scout troupe must be, according to the manuals, an independent entity, with a room of its own to which a scout may resort at any moment. It should have its own football and other teams, in fact be a club on its own. Unfortunately, to my thinking, Browne produced a successor, Peter Bligh, who held these views. He visited the club several times and said that a number of our boys would make good scouts. I rather wanted the scouts to be dropped, remembering previous difficulties, over altar servers, not to mention other things. However, it was decided to carry on with them. Bligh made the usual promises and doubtless meant to keep them. But I am afraid of the natural development. In a few months it will be 'I am satisfied with



two days a week but it isn't fair to the boys. It is contrary to the scout ideal that he should be tied to another club. It doesn't give him proper scope. We must hope for the best, perhaps the scheme will work after all.

A word about the Men's Guild. If you remember that lamentable group you may remember more about the earlier part of the following story than I do. My recollection is that they took charge of the Friday dances and the stewardship on the Monday ones. They then slacked off one by one till for the last 6 months or more, O'Neill and Connolly had to do everything alone – fires, floor sweeping, and act as steward, and doorkeepers when McGain was not available.

An exception was Schwenter who regularly came as a steward. But he had been laid up for over a month and the ex-members of the dance committee took the opportunity of inviting the rector and myself to a special meeting to hear how scandalously the dances are being mismanaged. I must say that the attack was distinctly moderate in tone though virulent in matter – unfairly and even ridiculously so; e.g. I had to observe that two of the drunks complained of were members of the Guild, one of them being one of the critics present. Their case was that they resigned in a body because you vetoed one of their proposals. This statement, with their extraordinary mentality, they put forward as reason for the new rector to entrust them with the control of the dances. O'Neill protested, but Morris was sufficiently plausible for Fr. Bruno to urge all parties to forget and forgive and elect a new committee. However, he was persuaded to hold things up till he had consulted Cain and Schwenter.

The attendance has been really falling off, especially on Mondays, attributed by some of the blackout, by others to extra dances on Mondays and Fridays at St Vincents, or to the weather or the war. The necessary Seel Street touch of inconsequence was lent to discussion (omitting the irrelevant question put by one member, 'How many of those here were at the Guild Hold Communion this morning?') by the fact that following precedent, we are continuing gambling, (whist drives) and stopping physical exercise (dancing) during Lent.

But seriously, there is something abnormal about the parish or at least its societies. I have just finished a census of all the (unmarried) men and boys from eleven to thirty two inclusive according to ages. These are the summaries – 11-13, 72. 14-18, 97. 19-32, 125. (Of the last group 19-25, 84. 26-32, 41.) This includes evacuees, men in the services, in jail and in asylums. The abnormality is that of the 97 possible club boys only 13 are in the club; of the 125 possible Guild there are only 12. This means that the majority in most cases are non-parishioners or probably ex-parishioners. Of the under 14 in the club the proportion of natives is much higher and all of them are from the school.

A frivol or two to wind up with. What my colleague calls the Louis-Chad axis for keeping the rector out of heresy – the necessity is based on the following discoveries; 1, he makes the sign of the cross in an unorthodox way; 2, he listens to the C of E services on the wireless, 3. Most suspicious of all he has been found several times reading the Bible – he has been shaken by the following. Fr. Chad's Legio Mariae, gave a Children's party at which a small boy broke his leg. It was discovered in time and he is nearly mended at the hospital. But the subsequent and natural rumours of the Legion being merely being merely a cloak for ritual sacrifice and child murder are attributed by Chad's unworthy suspicions to me as their origination.

I had better stop as I am feeling sleepy, and might in an unguarded moment make an inaccurate statement.

With best wishes,

P.S. The arrival of your letter provokes a further prolongation of mine. I am sorry if the main part of this, by preceding yours, while this section is subsequent to it, confuses the reckoning of epistolary debts and credits, but your natural mathematical genius has no doubt been further fortified by continual inspection of mission, abbatical, and school accounts.

I keep up my normal precipitous standard, by returning the Mass intention slip; Fr Bruno says I may sign it conscientiously.

Concerning your letter. It was very welcome, for you must be occupied. I did not see much of Fr. Paul on Wednesday as after Church there was a match at the Guildhall – which we won. Fr. Bruno intended to bring him down, but? However, he returns from Shrewsbury early today, so we hope to exhibit one aspect of the parish to him. I am sorry he won't see the gym, it is in good form. All the class attend, there is a great variety of exercise.

Pilkington is immensely pleased with both the attendance and the progress. The improvement is most marked since September. The standard is higher than anytime in my recollection.

Beside there being no midnight Mass, there is no Goodfellows this year. But there are several parish functions, which we hope will achieve an atmosphere.

As for Cumberland innovations...I do my best; but the continual questions, 'What did Fr Primavesi say in October 1932' and 'What did Fr Herbert do on the second Sunday of Advent 1937'? are rather a tax on my memory. I communicated your reference 'youthful indiscretion and irreverence' to the colleague (Fr. Chad Bourke), for whom it was meant. Of course I modified it slightly, saying that you did not really mean it, adding by way of annotation that you were glancing at his immeasurable insolence and unbridled invective. I am glad to say that he saw the point, contenting himself with a mild ten minutes of verbal eruption. He even threw doubt on the sincerity of my interpretation. So deep was his confusion that our Rector swerved from his rigid Cumberland notions of the truth and fell in to dissimulation by pretending to support him.

### Letter 3

55 Seel Street, Liverpool 1, 9/4/1940

Dear Father Abbot,

I am sending you these many lines just to say...I must pause and try to think of some reason besides the real one, which is to show off my nice new red ribbon. I will begin with a request for a permission. And perhaps slightly unusual, at least for me. I have received a present, which I am told is valuable, not to say beneficial, and I am asking your permission to refuse it, or pass it on to some parishioner who may find greater use for it than I can. My Rector, who is perhaps a little prejudiced as being the bearer of it to me from the donor. (Mr. Tracey of the Wood Street Public House – a generous benefactor of the Club) urges me to keep it. I don't mind keeping it for a short time, but somehow shrink from using it, especially when I consider what good it could do to some people I know. By the way I might mention it is in case you yourself might like it...I am sure Mr. Tracy would be pleased...it is a very large bottle of cod liver oil!

Another plausible excuse for writing is that Fr Chad is within speaking distance of you and I told him I would have to send you a warning against what he called the possible but distortion of the dry light of truth by refraction during its passage through the medium of his individual perception. That is how he talks when in good form. I prefer brevity and allusion to science and say simply that I write to guard myself against the bites of sharks. He is probably unable to give you the very latest, he may have told you about the murder in Upper Pitt Street on Saturday; I don't have the details, I only heard of it from the Rector who always gets the most trivial news – but I saw for myself something quite notable in Greatham Street on Sunday afternoon. The police made a raid on the criminals who play football in the street and made a solitary capture of...George Robinson who a short while ago was chaired in triumph from Lime Street to the Dwellings as a rescuee from the Altmark. Almost like the Patriot. I saw him today and ragged him – to his great relief. He said he fled from me yesterday, thinking I would 'tell him off'. Apparently the authorities saw the irony of it and are not summoning him; but he was told next time he would be 'marched up Seel St'.

Yesterday, a policeman, a new one said to me in the course of a talk, 'you're in charge of the Guildhall Boys? You've a tough job'. I wonder what he would have thought if he had been present that afternoon at a meeting of nine of those boys to whom Fr Chad was outlining his plan for a Junior Legio Mariae, - an hour and a half's meeting weekly as a minimum, opening with five decades (of the Rosary) and Litany (of Our Lady of Loretto) two hours Legio work a week of a kind to be chosen for them etc. etc. including a collection. And they took it like Lambs, and thought they would try it.

Talking of the club (as I naturally am), I must withdraw my former statement about their impeccableness – but for one occasion only. Three of the eighteen year olds behaved so badly one night that they were suspended indefinitely at O' Neil's insistence. Otherwise things are as before. They beat York House more emphatically in the return match and have wound up third in each of the Leagues. More important perhaps is that they won the junior LBA (Liverpool Boys Association) gym cup and returned in triumph with medals. We entered the same team for both senior and junior but as the rules for some reason forbid this duplication, we took the junior. Humble said to Pilkington, 'Are you going to start again winning everything'.

Scully was here yesterday, (by the way there has been a hiatus in this letter as regards its execution, which even my precaution in post dating it does not correct) and helped me to settle the problem of how great were the extensions (to the Church) of 1817. We had the invaluable aid of some of Fr Robinson's accounts which Fr



Justin sent me: e.g. lining 126 pews £148, purchase of pews for alterations £88, to J. Slater for building an addition to the Chapel including vaults £1060 etc. This sum Scully says is equivalent to about £5,000 today.

We had an entertaining afternoon at the CYMS (Catholic Young Men's Society) a fortnight ago. Schwenter, the president, mentioned the obligation of monthly Holy Communion. Whereupon demands were made, 'Why shouldn't the visitors of Sunday afternoons (there are a lot of these) be forced to receive HC also? This led to the general question of visitors. Why wasn't the rule kept? Why weren't they entered in to the visitor's book? Whose job was it? Why didn't the committee see to it? When the critics were exhausted, Rodriguez who had been sitting quietly all the time, rose and remarked, 'The Book is over there on the counter'. I asked for it and read out all the entries, which had been regularly made, upto and including that afternoon. Then I made the obvious comments.

This morning I went to Low Hill for requiem of dear of Canon Bennet who died after a brief illness. The Arch was there and all the canons and I counted over 90 of the clergy. Fr Howard preached. On the way back I called on Mrs Fell in the Radium Institute; she had been ill for weeks. So have others. This afternoon, I watched Fr Bruno baptising a doll at the children's service. When he asked, 'what shall we call him or her?', there were a chorus of suggestions. I say with pride that I had told him to see that the godparents made an offering and he supplied them with 2/6 each, announcing the amount to the congregation. I asked the nuns if they wanted Matrimony similarly illustrated and they took the suggestion. I have my doubts, in anycase the parties being under age their parents' consent must be obtained.

Other valuable communications must wait to my regret and your loss and be withheld if I am able to catch the post before the shark leaves for home waters.

#### Letter 4

55 Seel Street, Liverpool 11.6.1940

Dear Fr Abbott,

While waiting for Mr. Scully, who has wired his coming (Fr. Bruno is out for the morning but hopes to return in time to see him). I will employ the time in giving you what news there is. 'News' varies in importance according to the individual, as I noticed yesterday. Having heard on the wireless at 6.10 that Musso had done it at last, I was at (sic) – called on my way to the club to buy another bottle of the drink of the moment, at 6.20. The dealer with overcast countenance said. 'There is bad news' 'Italy?' I replied. 'Oh not that; the price of minerals (mineral water) has gone up.'. My estimates puts Wodehouse's apology to Liverpool higher in interest than either of these items. Sixteen years ago he wrote of some incident or story, 'This might have happened anywhere in civilisation – or even in Liverpool'. His apologia reported in the Post a day or two ago, was 'I was young and foolish in those days and had no sense of values. Today I should not dream of speaking disrespectfully of one of the greatest ports in the world – and one moreover which is close to Hoylake'.

Just had my xth interview with ARP prospectors for a shelter in the garden. Sometimes they find Fr Bruno in: sometimes me. My experience is always the same. They come in couples and ask for Fr. Primavesi. I take them into the garden and they produce a plan and after examining it register bewilderment. Then I say, 'That is the 1891 ordnance map you have there and there have been few changes since then'. We have a friendly chat and they take notes and they go away, and a few days later a fresh brace come along and repeat. What else is there? Wallace of the Memorial Stones opposite is doing a rapidly increasing trade. He has taken two boys from the club and is very much pleased with them.

One day last week, Lizzie came in just before lunch and said a policeman wanted to see the priest who had been in the Dwellings that morning. Expecting to be interviewed about some row – there have been rather a lot lately – I descended to do my best for our lawless flock and found sitting beside the bobby, a stranger – a sheeplike but sinister looking bloke – a curious blend. The Policemen began, 'have you been taking photographs this morning?' I replied, 'Certainly – two of Mrs Tracy, one of the old house in Hanover St. I forget the others'. 'Was one of College Lane'. 'That's it' I replied, 'and the last was the immense house bean in Pitt St'. 'Well it's against the law. I must ask for your camera and film. They will develop it at the C.I.D. in Dale Street.' The sheeplike bloke who was evidently the informant looked a trifle triumphant – I suppose he was only doing his duty as a citizen – till the Policeman continued 'It will be alright'. When I came back with my camera, the

sinister bloke had disappeared. I told the policemen that I had recently asked another, on duty, if it was all right and he had said it was all right if I kept away from the docks. I asked why it illegal to photograph our Parish, and he said that if the photos got into the wrong hands, they could be used for propaganda. How? As showing the devastation wrought by the German bombing. A charming comment on the activities of the Housing Department. After a comment I was something of an antiquarian, he went away with the spool, and copy of 'The Century' and a cutting from the Post about my photos. I have heard nothing more, but Tracey said he would have some fun with the C.I.D who patronise his pub. Before this he had been instrumental in fortifying my faith in doing one's duty. On my way to see Mrs Fell, who is slowly dying in Smithdown Road. It came on to rain and I was tempted to postpone my visit. My natural fortitude prevailed and I continued. As I was passing his pub. He called me in to a shelter (it was off hours) and offered me a drink. I explained I could not going in to hospital flavoured with alcohol.

'That's easy, take this tobacco – the Police use them'. Smithdown Rd? wait a few minutes and my friend on leave will run you up in my car.' Virtue was thus amply rewarded. But I have abandoned photo's till I get a recommendation from the City librarian to take to the authorities in the North West Hotel. It dawned on me rather late that my name is suspicious. I am thinking to changing it to something Yorkshire or Greek or both. Handy for the Parish too. But further international developments force me to change the post-hyphen section again – though I see in today's Post that the Greek's in soho have been fighting the Italians there with bottles.

Later Bruno was back for lunch but Scully had not come. During the meal Chad made a remark, which Bruno said should be reported to you. Apropos of some self-deprecatory statement by our Rector, Chad appealed to me thus, 'This pseudo-humility is even more nauseating than the real thing'.

A few Parish inconsequences to finish up with. A parishioner stopped me yesterday with the question, did I know Mrs. Meade. (You may remember that stormy petrel.) 'Well she and I and Mrs Bute were talking quietly about the murder when she suddenly went away and came back with a policeman and got him to take three boys, who were standing peacefully by the wall, away to the lock-up and they weren't doing nothing because I was watching them all the time. 'They kept Con Tyrrell all night in Prison.' My suggestion that she had left something out of her narrative was not well received, the reply being, 'It made his sister very ill'. I condoled with one of the Tyrrell Clan, who said her nephew had been released without a stain. The murder referred to was that of one of the Lydia Ann McCoys who was killed by a Lascar in what was Fitzgerald's pub in Park Lane, on Saturday. Park Lane is rather full these days, so is Pitt Street. Another McCoy or an allied Tighe or McDonough, is reported to have had an artery severed in prosecuting the feud. There was another big row and a crowd outside the Curio last night. In fact the good old days have returned. By the way, I found the collection recently an imitation of a George III Spode guinea with the inscription round the King's name, In Memory of the good old days 1766'.

Trusting all is well at Ampleforth,

Yours sincerely,

## Letter 5

55 Seel Street, Liverpool 1, 28<sup>th</sup> August 1940.

Dear Fr. Abbot,

It is about time that I drop another little pamphlet on you. Not that there is much to say – but it will be exercise for the typewriter if you don't mind being the anvil so to speak.

Your Lady Chapel looks very clean with new faint yellow paint on the walls which shows up Mrs. Cooksey's paintings effectively. Covering the skylight with a pane has, I think, definitely improved the general appearance, without darkening it. The new lino is, I believe, technically called stone colour though it suggests mud to me. It is still quite bare of pictures and other decorations. Mr. Scully was here a day or two ago, having had a weary night. He received orders (he is in the Canadian Army) to make a long railway journey the next morning, and retired to bed only to be called up to go a long way to collect the survivors of a German plane which had been shot down. He found them, four I think he said, horribly frightened believing that they would have their throats cut immediately, that being what they had been told on the best German authority. By the way we have lost our



third parish balloon. It broke loose in a storm and the cable swept Tyrrell, of the Dwellings, off a lorry and broke his leg.

I was in Bradford for a weekend some time ago and brought back a couple of stories of which I will pass on to you. The Labour majority in the Council proposed to make the landlords collect the rates from the tenants. The landlords objected in vain, till at one of their meetings (my brother was there and told me this) a lawyer outlined a campaign. He produced a set of calculations showing, by skilful inaccuracy that the measure would profit the landlords. These were then sent to the press together with carefully compiled letters denouncing the proposal as a landlord's ramp. The consequence popular outcry led to the withdrawal of the motion.

The second is a chess story. During a match the Bradford captain inspecting the board of one of his weaker players, suggested that as it was getting late and his game clearly lost, he might resign. The player, agreed. Presently his opponent observed that as some games were still unfinished, they might work out on their own. Again the Bradford player nodded, continued the game and unexpectedly won. Then it appeared from his delight, that he had been quite unconscious of his resignation and resumption, his nods having been automatic responses to interruptions. Query – whose win was it? The weak point of the story is the sequel, that both players offered to yield the game. As you may know, chess players don't admit a fair defeat. I remember one master having lost the championship to Lasker at Hamburg, attributed his failure to sea air, and in issuing a challenge to a return stipulated that it must be played in a town at least fifty miles from the coast. Chess reminds me of Fr. Donovan's recent visit: we played chess in the cellar during raids. Now I play with Fr Chad. Besides his chess, Fr Donovan's stay was very refreshing; when he wasn't talking theology with Chad he was bringing my scripture and ancient history up to date. Do send him again some time.

To return to the parish, 'For the love of God, father, give us the pledge'. Half way through, 'for the love of the saints let us just have one glass a day'. At the end, the pledge being reconstructed, 'For the love of the angels, father, give us sixpence to get a drink with'. Later in the evening I saw them coming out of Cassidy's. He said that they had indeed had only one in his place, but that if it was not the first of a series it was perhaps the last, but certainly one of a sequence. But I am doing the Parish an injustice; they were ex-parishioners. To repair this injustice I will testify to the increased historical knowledge of the Parish. A pamphlet lying in the sacresty, bearing the title, 'Which comes first, Canterbury or Rome?' was found annotated in a server's handwriting 'Antioch'. We were somewhat interested in a Chinese who came to the 8 o'clock Mass every day for three weeks, and used a Chinese prayer book. Unfortunately, he knew no English at all. Talking of Chinese, he said that the Chinese shelter in Henry Street is always spotlessly clean.

The continual night 'warnings' are becoming a real nuisance. The only good result is that unmusical ear is growing able to distinguish between the 'warnings' and the 'all clear'. That is, when I hear them. If I am asleep they don't wake me; going round with the collector the Sunday after the noisiest of them, when according to O'Neill who was watching, the planes were over Park Lane low enough to see the swastika on them, and our shrapnel was falling on the Guildhall roof, I had to confess to one household after another that I had slept through it. The wardens say our people behave very well except for a girl or two who became hysterical. But now those unmethodical Huns come any time after ten and I really cannot go to bed at unnatural hours. It is only a slight alleviation to be told by Fr McEvoy that his parishioners sing, 'O Holy St. Patrick come to our Raid'. A few club boys had an alarming experience at our camp in the Wirral. They woke O'Neill up with tidings of planes overhead and the bombs began to explode closer and closer, they seeming to be just outside the tent. Actually it was three hundred yards away, quite close enough. The Yorks had a bad time, one in the front garden, and one at the back and a third next to Mrs York's mother, a few doors off.

I don't know whether you have heard of our club camps, we took a field beyond Arrow Park and set up tents, and a party went over each weekend. There was a glowing appreciation of the boys to O'Neill after he left to join the army, mentioning that they had completely falsified numerous dire warnings he had received from others who had dealt with boy's clubs. Mr Wallace has applied for another boy on the three he already has. We start gym again on Sunday. Prospects are good, except for O'Neill's liability, to be called up, he has been passed, Grade one, by the medical board. I don't know what will happen to the club if he goes. The older ones could be trusted to run the club almost by themselves. After long search in vain, a handicraft teacher came of his own accord. It was Mr. Kelly, living in Bold Street, and one of the Legion of Mary. He arranged for one section to take a table to pieces and rebuild it: for another to strip the paint off and section off the wall and plaster it with a smooth finish, and so on. Then with these tasks, incomplete, he was given overtime work for a while, so that we are held up again. Jim Brennen has shown them how to paint and varnish the old church benches, so that someone remarked that if you come you would think the club had been pinching your new ones.

The Robinsons ask about you every Sunday. He has been reading right through all Dorothy on his railway journeys to London, having met her (on paper) for the first time. Did you listen to her on Dogma or Chaos, on the wireless? I am sorry I haven't any Seel Street inconsequences to tell you, at least I can't recall any at the moment though I think I had some when I began this installment. Chad much pleased with the following – At this week's Legion meeting McCormick read the logbook for the week. 'At approximately 10.5 commented that the time was really 10.30, whereupon with devastating calm, 'I said approximately'. Chad described this as the perfect reply but I am not certain whether the perfection lies in the comparatively miniature size of the defendant, or his tone, or his notion of approximateness.

I hope you are keeping well and as unworried as possible.

With best wishes.

## Letter 6

1<sup>st</sup> September 1940

Dear Father Abbot,

Fr. Bruno remarked that someone might drop you a line to say we are unharmed, so here it is. I will give my first impressions first and heresay after. It will probably bore you as much as I was bored by the accounts on the collecting round today, but a carbon copy may be interesting here later. Yesterday I was at the Guildhall. The Chinese consul had asked for the ballroom to run a concert and play and two dozen or so Chinese came to help Brennan and O'Neill in putting up the stage, but their willingness was nullified by linguistic difficulties.

Skipping to 8.45, confessions began to slacken, and I was about to emerge to remonstrate humorously with Joe Fox for making his Quarante Ore preparations sound like raid noises when I heard the sirens going. Then someone came in as though nothing was happening, and when I did come out of the Church was in darkness, though Miss Scholes and co were carrying on in the sacristy, with the candles etc. She had asked Chad, 'Do you hear the A.A Guns?' and he had replied, 'no, but I have been listening to bombs for the last five minutes'. I found him with Fox and the piety stall girls at the porch and they said, 'Have you seen the fire down the street at O'Brien's factory?' I looked rather reluctantly and saw a reddish cloud reaching across the street. But it had already been got under control and ARP men were hurrying back close to the 'site' wall. It was not O'Brien's really but No. 50 a little further down, where as you of course know, Dr. Perry the best dentist lived (and his son after him) from 1803 or earlier till 1839, having left the city (King St) for the suburbs between 1797 and 03.

Next door where his contemporary, Mrs Alice Oates ran her famous infants school, was almost damaged. Casks were strewn over the road. We came to supper and Chad announced another big blaze by the Salthouse Dock; I glanced at it from my window but another burst of gunfire sent me down to supper. During supper the all clear went. After learning with relief that there was a letter from the Archbishop instead of instructions for the early masses, I went to the Guildhall, meeting young Socedo in Slater St. who said the Dock Office was blazing.

All the way groups were standing at the corners of the streets watching the dome red hot with flames shooting out. The glare lit up the open space between Dickenson St. and St Michael and was reflected from the windows of that Church. Park Lane was a remarkable sight. It was naturally dark by this time but one could see up its whole length the groups watching. While talking with O'Neill and some boys at the Guildhall door, Eyres came up and said he had just come from helping to exhume two dead from a shelter in Clayton Square, and that there were more inside the shelter, which had received a direct hit. On my way back I climbed to the top of the Lydia Ann St. flats to look at the fire again. It was beginning to die down a little though still covered with small flames, and fragments could be seen dropping down to inside of the drain. More sirens and explosions sent us to the cellar again.



## Letter 7

25th September 1940

Dear Father Paul,

Skip if you have not heard this one. British prisoner writing home, 'being treated most kindly, food excellent, butter plentiful etc. Tell this to friends. Tell the army, tell the airforce, tell it to the marines'. It passed the German censor. Might be of use to your English class, as example of idiomatic expression.

I am sending you a few lines to (1) while away the time until Uncle Adolf goes – he is flying about at the moment. (2) To mention that a parishioner has sent me a volume of collected tracts among which are the pamphlets of Fr. Adrian Towers and his adversary Mr. Comber, Rector of Oswaldkirk. The latter complains that 'out of the 63 poor children in the village of Ampleforth 44 of them are the children of protestant parents who by various inducements have been prevailed on to send them to the Catholic Charity School'. Etc. I suppose there are copies at Ampleforth. Almond refers to them. To say a word about the Boys Club. After much search I found a handicraft instructor and credited him with your £5 for tools and materials, but unfortunately after a good beginning, he was called off by overtime work. When he was available again, the nightly raids had set in, which rather spoilt arrangements.

Also the windows of the workroom were blown in by the bomb which burnt out the Custom House and the dock office. (I was in this building a day or two before, about an unpaid tobacco licence, and found it congested with supplementary shipping and other departments). When a week later an Exciseman called me. I sympathised with the disorganisation the fire had caused (it was a memorable sight, the great dome blazing and flames pouring out of the windows) but he dismissed my condolences, saying 'We were prepared: we had every document in duplicate at Manchester, and some in triplicate; and we were able to report to Admiralty House that we carried on on Monday, as though nothing had happened.

Still, these continuous raids are a nuisance. At first it was pitiful to see all the women and children taking their bedding to the shelters at dusk, following later when the pubs shut, but now they are settling down to it with reading and singing and cards. We were anxious at first about the result of a warning during a church service. But not now. The first time we had one was at the 11am Mass one Sunday. It was the feast of Our Lady's Nativity and I was in the pulpit drawing the obvious lessons from the text, 'Aram, Naasson, and Aminadab'. The congregation was enthralled, or asleep, and nothing happened. The same thing happened a Sunday later, when I was in the house, so I went across to see, and found the choir in full blast with the Credo. I don't think they completely drowned the sirens, because I found one woman in the porch and one nervous lad going off to a shelter. Otherwise no notice was taken.

But Chad had a more trying experience. One Tuesday he had a church full of COM's when the guns went off without warning. This is unpleasant because I for one don't like the bits of jagged shrapnel people show me as having missed them by inches. One hysterical girl might have set the lot off, but he controlled them, till the All Clear went after a somewhat lengthened service.

Saturday night seems Jerry's favourite, an extra loud bang brought me out of the confessional last Saturday to see if the Church was still intact. The same night a priest in the next parish was killed when the presbytery was hit.

But I suppose you have your own worries, and in any case hear the Liverpool News – what there is of it – from various sources. However, I will give you the latest, of my own experience only because I cannot believe what happened in the same street unless one sees it.

On Saturday night Dr Leyland Robinson read me a letter from the Chief medical officer of the London Hospitals. He said that twenty three London hospitals had been damaged, three of them irretrievably, nurses and doctors killed, 2000 beds destroyed and not a single patient injured, some staff work!

Yesterday I met the wife of a Chineseman from Limehouse, who said we don't know what war is in peaceful Liverpool; later I was told of a Lorry Driver who after his Liverpool experience, was anxious to get back to the quiet of London. Take your choice on this one!

At the OSB tea yesterday, Leo Caesar gave us two bits of good news. Two or more attempted invasions had failed and thousands of corpses had been piled up on the shores of Holland. A squad of Airmen with whom he had been consorting were confident that the war would be over by Christmas. However, it cheered us and almost seemed to receive confirmation from Uncle Adolf not putting in his usual nightly appearance. I return to bed in good spirits after visiting the shelter under the old wash house (This was the first public wash house in Europe).

By the way I have moved my bed to the chess club. More prosaic people call it the cellar, but after many games of chess there with Chad I re-christened it. At first I slept throughout many raids in my room at the top of the house, but after a period of insomnia plus earlier Boche visits, I changed to the Chess Club. I don't suppose it is really safer, but it feels so, and is certainly quieter. Well I had insomnia again, and so it went on with my indexing of the Registers, and other tasks, interspered with Feiling's History of the Tory Party. About 3am there was a notable bang, and after an interval Fr. Bruno came down to say everything was quiet. He had seen the city covered with dust and debris from his window and had gone out to investigate. But all the neighbours were in the shelters.

He still sleeps in his room. But my system has the advantage that when the bombs etc begin I go to bed instead of getting up. Two houses in the neighbourhood razed. An unexploded time bomb in Duke Street with the area roped off and nearby house evacuated. The pinholes in the enclosed postcard show the localities. The fourth fell outside the Parish at the junction of Church and Parker St, on the corner shop, and smashed all the big shop windows, except one which is to let. You will note, holding it to the light that all three bombs are in a line crossing the church. The fourth, off the card, is also in line, So Christmas seems further off than it did last night.

## Letter 8

55 Seel Street 27<sup>th</sup> September 1940.

Dear Fr Abbot,

I find in the drawer of the excellent table, the provision of which was one of the more notable landmarks in your Rectorship, an unfinished letter to you describing the earlier incidents of the night of the Saturday the Dock office was burnt. However, that is ancient history, and I will add a few fragments to the note I sent to Fr. Paul a day or two ago. I presume he has shown it to you. I have added that a moiety of a brick from Slater Street was projected over the houses and landed on the lawn ricocheted and broke our dining room window. From the postcard, you may have gathered that this bomb fell at the point where the backs of Morris and others in Slater St meet the backs of Roberts, Salisburys etc in Fleet St. No one was injured, most of them being in shelter. The houses were of course damaged. I might add, to avert a possible charge of sensationalism, that I plotted the points where the bombs fell before I noticed they were in a straight line and the line passed over the Church.

Yesterday, Paddy Sing called to see me after Mass, having just returned from the West Indies. He said the only incidents were that a torpedo was fired at them at a range which made it impossible to change course; but a providential piece of wreckage bobbed up and intercepted the torpedo. The other was passing a small boat with a sail and three men in it who waved at them, but the captain, having seventy three on board and a cargo of bananas, would not stop, fearing a German trap.

Then I was asked to plead with a mother, who had suddenly turned against an engagement, on the grounds that the parties were too young, after being in favour of it for two years.

In the afternoon, I was asked to supply a char woman immediately. I found one in Lydia Ann Street, who was overjoyed, saying that she had no food that day. Fr. Bruno met her after she had been confirmed in the appointment and told her that she held the reputation of St Peter's in her hands. On my way back from Lydia Ann, I met an excited policeman who exclaimed, 'They always go the wrong way'. He referred to an ambulance racing up Duke Street. 'You might go to the Henry St Shelter, Father, there's a sick soldier there'. I went and found a voluble group of women who said he wasn't a Catholic but his mother had been: that he had been in the shelter most of the week with pneumonia etc. Then a number of men turned a corner at the far end of the shelter carrying a soldier in uniform. I had only time to give him a blessing before the ambulance carried him off. Further enquiries elicited only contradictions – been there a day and night with nothing to eat for three, four, five, six days – we never spoke to him or he to us.

The evening paper contained an assurance given to the Earl of Derby and some councillors that the Government were fully aware of the importance of Liverpool, and had increased the already over proportionate defences and would nevertheless still further augment them. There was very heavy gunfire and we retired to the comfortable cellar. At the approach of 11, I left and on opening the door of 63, saw an immense glare apparently along the river. I would have gone down via Duke Street to get a better idea of its cause but the guns began again so I returned home. I asked a wayfarer or two of the fire but they seemed indifferent.

This morning we inspected the damage. The smaller block of Spaling Street houses had been crushed by the collapse of the big warehouses behind it though the major part of the latter had fallen in to Shaw's Alley. Firemen were still at work. All the people were in the shelter so there was no loss of life. The Warehouse in Paradise Street between Custom House Lane was a shell. The big lodging house at the far end of Frederick Street was a wreck. A building in Cooper's row is said to have been demolished, but I must have missed it, though I noted ropes across the end of the street. Incendiaries were dropped in Park Lane opposite the Guildhall.

But the real damage was the docks. I give heresay only not having seen it. Three miles of dock warehouses full of a recently arrived convoy's cargo destroyed. Urgent message to CYMS of Sts Patrick, Vincent, and Malachi to turn out and help against the fire. Cunard building windows all gone. Bruno went to the dock front this morning and reports all warehouses wrecked. No news of rest of city except from a Mount Carmel priest who told me this morning that eight of his houses were demolished. Fire still raging. I cannot think of anything else to say. I forget the most important of all, not a single parishioner have so far have been killed.

## Letter 9

55 Seel Street Liverpool 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1940

Dear Fr Abbot,

Thank you for your most interesting letter. I am not attempting an answer at this moment; but merely acknowledging its receipt and informing you that I have handed the circular to the Rector. Also I must correct an impression that I appear to have given you. When I said, 'Bruno is more positive than Chad', a statement that naturally startled you, I was not presuming to sit in judgement on my bretheren, especially these two who are illustrious by their merits and vertues and are rapidly turning 55 in to a priory of Saints. It was only in the one concrete case of the direction of the plane that I faintly seemed to notice an even more extreme vehemence on the part of one of them.

Talking of Asiatics, the Corporation has rushed in where you feared to tread, and established a lot of Chinese in Seel Street at number 5 and 49, the old dispensary. Across the way in the Men's Room, the people of Magull Street take their nightly unrest, I clevly call it the cave of Maghullan. The Guildhall is full of Sparling Street furniture, over which the women sit on guard in turns. I found one evening an almost, or quiet, weeping youth in the Vestibule, confronted by a determined-looking, and satisfied-looking John Michael Keefe. I asked the youth why he, a non-member was trespassing on the club premises. He explained that that he desired to go to the dance room. Why? To take a message. Then Keefe would take it for him. Oh but he had been informed that no one was there. Forbearing to comment on his contradiction, I asked him the nature of the message. His mother had send him for something she had stored there. As his mother was not a Sparling St evcacuee, I left JM still on guard there where he had been placed by O'Neill.

I hope you won't be disappointed with our ruins when you come next week. There is very little to show in spite of all the bombings and letter writing. There is still crime, they will break in to empty houses remove any lead piping, (for sale), tear up the floors (for firewood), strip the tiles, and set fire to empty mattresses.

With best wishes.



**Letter 10**

55 Seel Street Liverpool 1 8<sup>th</sup> October 1940.

Dear Fr Paul,

Thank you so much for your letter, which was an unexpected pleasure, mine not calling I think for any reply – and I know that you are kept fully occupied. If I happen to write to you again, please do not trouble to answer unless there is a direct question. It is good of you to remember the club and to offer further gifts. But I won't take advantage of this for the present, especially as you have other calls on the funds. We are in special need just now, and have been held up in the application of your former £5. But thanks all the same.

I gave you greetings to Bruno and Chad. I recollect your anecdote of St Charles: in fact I made use of it again in a 'conversation piece' which I once wrote to accompany the Devil's mate. A Belmont novice stalking his soul against a Grange Tea and having got in to a hole appealed to various saints – his patron saint said it served him right, his guardian angel couldn't play chess, St Dunstan couldn't help him out without the fire tongs, which Br. Paul was using in a discussion.

I have wondered away from the point – if there was one – anyway from your letter. You say that you would be alarmed at the raids if you were here, but I imagine that after the first experience, which is certainly frightening, you would remain unruffled. I noticed yesterday for instance that on my way to the post, people were walking around unperturbed: I don't mean moving rapidly as though on an errand, but strolling casually as for an evening perambulation. At first one fled to the nearest shelter, or stayed at home. I could look down Seel Street from my window and see it empty, with cars and lorries stationary and apparently unattended. Now no one takes any notice. It is different of course when the AA begin, one has to take cover then except boys and children, who find an ever fresh pleasure in collecting bits. It is said some mothers soothe their kids to sleep by promising if they go to sleep like good children, a nice piece of shrapnel will arrive in the morning.

One was jumpy for a time, I would be looking in to a well known bookshop window – wondering whether I had not in my semi-demi wakefulness in the early hours been misled by an association of ideas in making the intention for Philip, Son and Nephew, instead of the 'son and nephew' on the schedule when I hear thunderous noise behind me and see in the shop window reflection of people bolting in all directions.

12<sup>th</sup> October 1940

I was called away by Chad at this point on the plea that bombs were coming close, and I went with alacrity. Perhaps he merely wanted a game of chess; but I have to depend on his ear for German music. I can't distinguish between bombs and AA especially mobile AA which plonk themselves outside a shelter and scare the people inside, and then go off to do it to another lot.

That was some days ago, and I had better finish off at once. The Abbot was over this week and suggested that we each take a week at Ampleforth, and a majority of two to one decided I should go first. So I may be there next Tuesday. It seems uncertain whether these visits are the second week of retreat or the unexpended part of the summer holidays. I hope to combine the best features of both.

Yours Sincerely.

P.S. We were able to treat the Abbot family to a fairly good raid on Friday night which dropped four bombs in our Parish, two in the roadway damaging windows only. One on a pub killing several people and another on a hotel also causing deaths.

**Letter 11**

55 Seel Street Liverpool 1 10<sup>th</sup> December 1940.

Dear Fr Abbot,

Here is the postscript foreshadowed at the conclusion of my reluctant performance just concluded as advocatus diaboli alias Fr. J. There is not much news of the Parish. A rumour current a fortnight ago that building was to be resumed immediately on the Kent Square site has not materialised. Turning to slightly less recent events – do you remember the old house in Pitt St with 1798 over the door. The Triplex Grate Co who used it as a storehouse have recently transferred their office there from Richmond Street and repainted and furnished it as their showroom. The manager received my enquiries kindly and said his office in which we talked was reputed to be the Mayor's parlour.

Have I mentioned some time ago I spent a day in the Picton examining Herdman's water colours of old Liverpool. I could only deal with the Park Lane district – some forty or fifty from 1820 onwards but mostly of the 1860's. It was fascinating and I took many notes. I thought of having photo's made of the more interesting ones for our parish records but the cost was a bit too high. They will let me photograph any I want on the premises as they have a suitable room for their work.

**Letter 12**

55 Seel Street Liverpool 1 Midnight 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1940.

Dear Fr Abbot,

Christmas greetings, and a tailpiece for my last farrago. I will tell you the worst at once. Some holes have been made in our church roof and most of the windows blown out. Same with the house and the school. No one hurt incase you haven't heard. The telephone is out of order and there is something wrong with telegrams, letters seem uncertain in quick delivery.

I don't remember much on Friday night but Saturday's papers said 'the heaviest yet'. Reports say that the Pro-Cathedral was hit, its school destroyed, old St Nicholas gutted, the LMS tunnel blocked, a hole in St John's Lane. At 6:45 the barrage began. Useless to wait in Church so I descended to the 'chess club'. Was reading when the lights went out. Then the crash of falling masonry, very close. I thought it was the front of the house. We got out and Chad's voice said 'It's all right, it's only the cellar door blown off by an incendiary device'. I knew it was a comforting lie. We went upstairs and thought the top floor was on fire, but it was only the glow from a hole in the roof. The whole street was ablaze.

I went to Back Colquitt and found the ARP men hoping that the fire engine would come soon. To the Guild Room, doors blown in, big balk of timber across the entrance. To Sacristy where sacristians were carrying on as usual despite a bit hole in the roof. In the Church, Frs Bruno and Chad were in the gallery examining a hole in the roof on the street side or the organ. Two more holes in the lady chapel and a big stone in the sanctuary which had come through the skylight.

Went to the door and saw a huge blaze in Hanover Street. I surveyed the wreckage, Seel Street strewn with timber and metal.

**Letter 13**

55 Seel Street, Liverpool 1 4<sup>th</sup> May 1941

Dear Fr Abbot,

A blitz tonight. It started at 10:30 and continued for much of the night. There was much more noise than usual. Then the all clear at 2:45am so we inspected. The back of Rodriguez's house was demolished. There was a big

blaze in Duke Street. At the Guildhall, all the windows were smashed. Part of Heap's mill wrecked. Our Church windows were blown out again! So were the girls school. St Michael's nave is now ruined though the spire still stands. Most of South Castle Street is burnt out or destroyed. So is the bottom of James Street and the overhead station near it. Saw the Dock Office, Custom House on fire. All of Lime Street full of smoke or empty buildings. Bruno has been to St Mary's and found it completely burnt out.

The Church and house are still standing.

## **The Chasuble**

A note or two was written on the Lancashire and the Benectines by Dom Gilbert Dolan O.S.B. In this note, it mentions of a great Chasuble and the main parts of this information has been reworded below:

At St Peter's Church, Seel Street, the great Chasuble is a very fine and carefully preserved item of which is Florentine gold tissue, with a raised design of conventional fruit and scrolls in crimson velvet. This appears to have been made at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. At some point in its history it has been cut down to form a more usable shape in the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century. Pope Leo X sent to King Henry VIII, some magnificent robes and it is believed that one of the robes was this Chasuble which was gifted to St Peter's Liverpool.

The robe was magnificent. Feather stitching, gold couching and the colourings of the reds, blues and greens shaded and wonderfully preserved. During its history, the Chasuble in around the 18<sup>th</sup> Century was in the private chapel at Newburgh Hall, York. This was the seat of the Belayses, Viscounts Fauconberg. However it further moved around during this time. When the 4<sup>th</sup> Viscount passed away in 1774, his Church fittings and fixtures were removed to a dower-house of the family, Angram Hall.

In 1795, they were then taken by one of the Viscount's sisters, Mary, wife of Thomas Eyre of Hassop co Derby Esq. to a small chapel which she had fitted up in the village of Owlston. Again, they were removed to Crayke Castle, another Fauconberg possession, and then about 1830, to Easingwold Priory, where some of them are now (at the time of writing).

However, the chasuble in question was about this time, however, gifted to St Peter's where it is treasured both for its beauty as a work of art and its long chain of historical associations. As a final note, it is noted that the table silver, of excellent design, brought to the presbytery by Fr. Macdonald in 1788 is still in use there (1898). History does not record where this artifact now is.

## **The Church up to the Millennium.**

In 1962, Fr Martin Rocheford O.S.B sees the importance of the Parish History and understanding that the Church was in decline from its earlier years, deposits the pre-1837 Parish Records at the Liverpool's Record Office.

In 1976, the name of St Peter's Seel Street is disbanded and the Church is transferred to the Polish community. For a short time, its new title would be Our Lady of Czestochowa, however this was only for a period of 2 years until the Church closed its doors officially. Again, as per 1962, Fr Everest sees the importance of the Parish Records and deposits them with the Liverpool Record Office in 1978.

In 1993, the Church is deconsecrated and is locked up for a period of time. It was during this time that while the Church wasn't being used, it was still 'as a Church' and could easily have been opened up for worship at any point.

Would the Church see worship one more time?



## Mother Teresa

On the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1996, Mother Teresa, on a visit to Liverpool came to St Peter's Seel Street. She was followed everywhere she went and the Church was opened for this special occasion. Below image, *copyright getty images*



## Urban Splash - 2003

In 2003, there were plans to convert St Peter's Seel Street into high specification offices by Urban Splash. They sadly did the building no favours. All the original plasterwork and ornate paint on the walls were chipped off to reveal bare brickwork. Many of the statues, organ, fixtures and fittings went elsewhere.

- The Altar image went to Liverpool's R.C Cathedral where it was damaged in transit but still in situ at the Cathedral.
- The Statue of St Peter is now at the Liverpool R.C Cathedral Crypt.
- The freestanding state of St Benedict is now located with the Benedictines at St Begh's Priory in Cumbria.

The below images show how Urban Splash left the building during restoration. They removed as much as possible and there are still many artefacts that have not been traced. What became of the Altar in the Lady Chapel? Where there any further stained-glass windows removed that had been left in the Church during its time?

Funding for this project was received from the EU (£260k), the North West Development Agency (£190k) and Urban Splash itself (£450k).

Before Urban Splash took on the building, they were situated in a 3-story office in Concert Square and were looking to move buildings. One interest was the former St Peter's Church, Seel Street so this could either be converted to high specification offices, or even offices for themselves.

Urban Splash is one of the most recognised and world's leading regeneration firms who could transform derelict properties, and historic buildings. Concert Square was one of the first projects for Urban Splash.



Many people believed it couldn't work, but one of the co-founders, Jonathan Falkingham thought otherwise. He stated that they did the first loft conversions in the North of England despite people stating that they were too 'open', the ceilings were too high and drafty.

They also brought outside drinking to Liverpool City Centre and Tom Bloxham and Jonathan (the founders of Urban Splash) knew this would take off.

Originally purchasing a shop for the selling of posters, they decided on adding a bar there instead (The Baa Bar). It was a success and they set up Urban Splash in 2003.

It was during the conversion of St Peter's Church that it was decided not to move offices, but to create a new bar/restaurant in the building. Together with an ex director from Iceland, Stuart Ross, they set about transforming the building to what we know today. (*Copyright Liverpool Echo*)

The conversion of St Peter's Seel Street to Alma De Cuba certainly saved the building from being added to English Heritage at Risk List. It was unused for several years after being deconsecrated and simply locked up. Only being used for when Mother Teresa visited the property for a special service. As previously stated, the conversion took the building back to bare brick, and some of the ornate statues and Lady Chapel altar were removed. Some of these items have been traced.

The 12-foot painting that was situated at the Altar of St Peter's, Seel Street is still a mystery on its current location. Painted by Edward du Jardin (1817-1889) and dated 1845, it is titled "The Nations of the World paying homage to St Peter". It has been traced to the RC Cathedral Liverpool, however upon request to view this item, it was confirmed that it is in an inaccessible part of the Cathedral and cannot be viewed. However, it is believed that this item was loaned out some years ago and is now possibly sitting in the Vatican Museum.

Urban Splash must be congratulated in some way. While they went in to 'save' the Church building, they took it back to bare brickwork taking away the original painted plaster walls, however while they could have used this building as their offices, it is fortunate that the building was turned in to Alma De Cuba and opened the building once again to the general public.

The building will continue to hold many secrets that were not recorded in history. Bodies ready for 'burial' in the Crypt were stored within the Lady Chapel so that services could still be taken, but it is still unsure on how they were lowered into the Crypt. Perhaps further in-depth exploration of the crypt in due course will reveal further secrets of the Church. My thanks go to John Ritchie for the above information.





*Above and below Image Copyright Liverpool Echo –The property in 2000.*



*Image Copyright Liverpool Echo – This shows the property in 2001.*





St Peter's Church Seel Street Liverpool which is to be converted into offices by developer urban splash in 2003 – Above images - *Copyright Liverpool Echo*

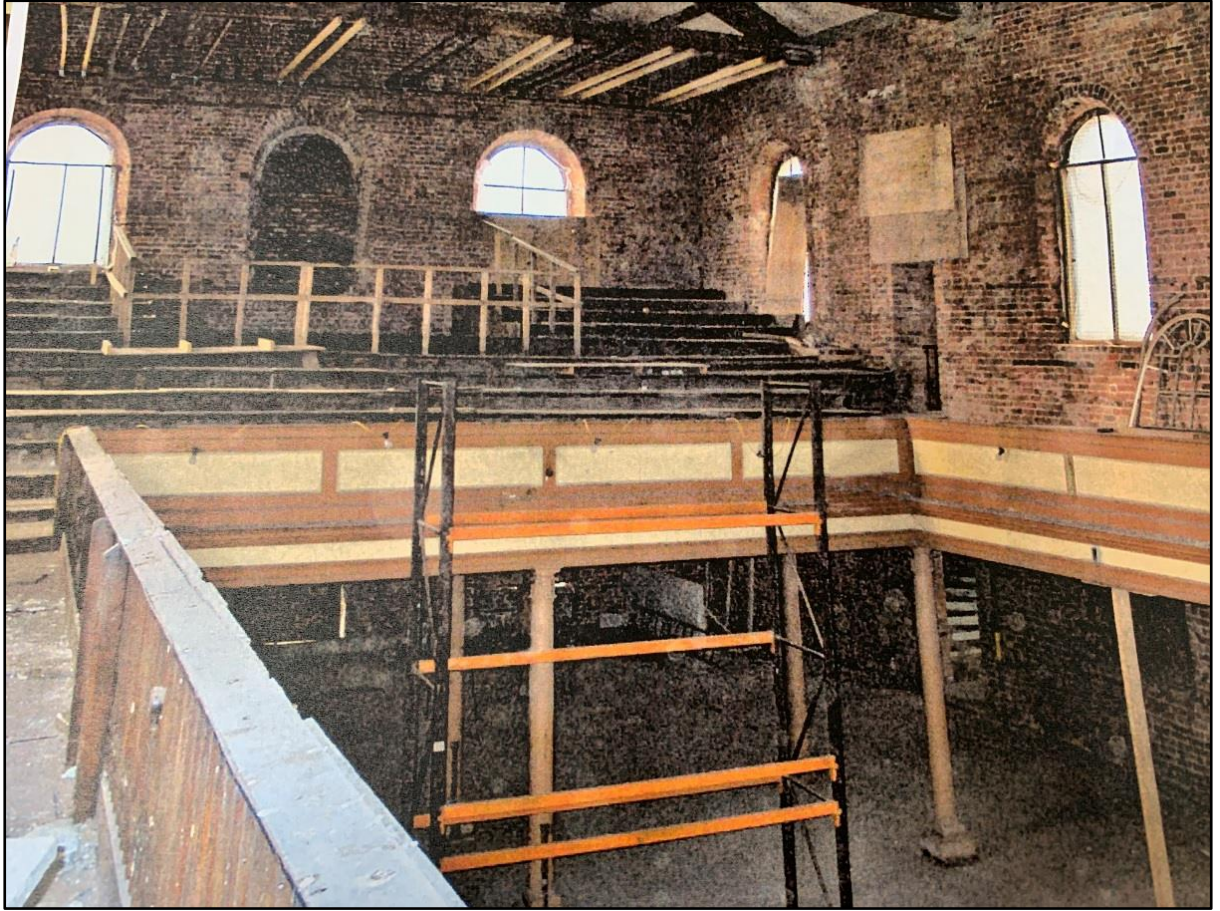




*Above and below images – Copyright Liverpool City Council*









## 2004 - The Crypt Discovery

In 2003, while restoring the Church, the development workers came across the Crypt area and found the coffins of many Fathers and lay people in this area. They knew of the bodies in the Church but weren't exactly sure where they were up to this point.

The listed building was under restoration at the time being converted by Urban Splash. Before starting work on the Church, the Company director of Urban Splash stated that he knew that there were bodies in the Church but weren't entirely sure where they were at the time of purchase.



During the discovery, Fr Bede Brewer O.S.B's remains were found. Dom Bede Brewer was one of the founder members of Ampleforth Abbey in 1802 and Ampleforth were keen to have the body.

In 2004, Fr Brewer was buried at Ampleforth along with the remains of 6 other monks. These were:

- James Calderbank
- Denis Allerton
- Benedict Glover
- Francis Fairclough
- Gregory Robinson
- Joseph Glover

It was sad to read that a further set of remains were found, possibly those of St Peter's founder, Rev A. B Macdonald, but sadly due to a lack of time, his remains were not identified in time and he was reburied along with 14 lay people in Ford Cemetery, Liverpool. A sad ending to the founder of St Peter's.



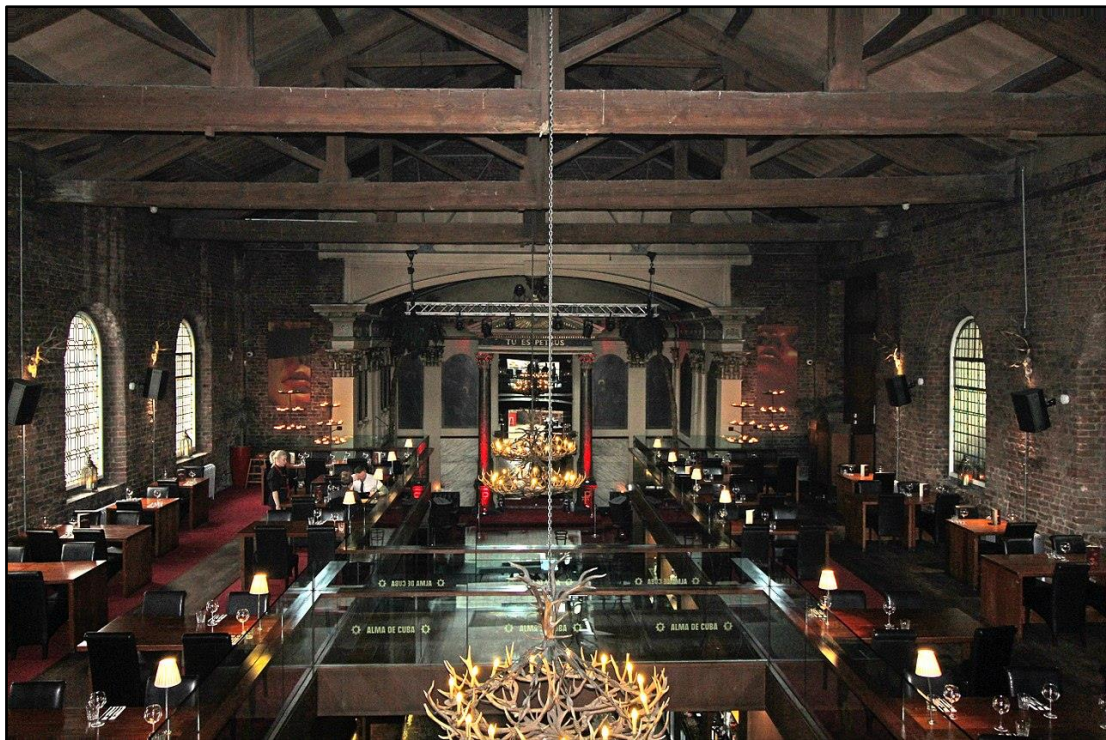


## 2005 – Alma De Cuba

In 2005, the work was finished on the transformation of St Peter's Church to that of Alma De Cuba. Urban Splash had begun the conversion with a view to creating high specification offices, but this was not to be. The former St Peter's Church would be renamed as Alma De Cuba, a themed Restaurant and Bar on two floors. The ground floor would be the Bar area, with booths either side of the main bar, which was placed in the centre of the former Church, and the Restaurant situated on the first floor, overlooking the Altar section of the Church.



The opening of Alma De Cuba, September 2005. *Copyright Liverpool Echo. (above and below)*





The original owner of Alma De Cuba worked with architect Richard Eastwood to recreate the feel of many abandoned churches he visited which were overgrown across the Caribbean. It started off with themed music, and the food was inspired by Central America. While the opening of the building began to draw in the crowds, it started to be the place to be. Liverpool Football Club held its players party there after their win in 2006 and even Liz McClarnon filmed the video for her 2006 solo debut single.



Luis Garcia, Sissoko, Cisse and Traore at Alma de Cuba FA Cup winners party in May 2006 (*Copyright Liverpool Echo*)

However, the owner of Alma De Cuba struggled with the business side. They owned various properties in Liverpool at the time which included Baby Cream, the Lyceum Café Bar, the Blue Bar and Grill in the Albert Dock. Only three months later, the Lyceum Café Bar went into liquidation, but Alma De Cuba was owed by a separate company Korova Corporation. In 2007, Alma De Cuba is sold to investment company TGI Ltd who continued to run the building as Alma De Cuba.



Sense of Sound choir perform at Alma de Cuba Dec 2009.

*Copyright Liverpool Echo*





The main Bar on the Ground Floor of Alma De Cuba – *Copyright Liverpool Echo*



Gospel brunch lunch at the Altar of Alma De Cuba showing the roofline in the mirror reflection. *Copyright Liverpool Echo*





The First Floor Restaurant at Alma De Cuba in 2015 showing the Altar. *Copyright Liverpool Echo.*