

# The Roman Catholic Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul



(A Guide to the history, the architecture and the distinctive features)

by

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# Contents

A Short History of Catholicism in Wolverhampton

The Church (A short history of the building that we see today)

The Guide to the Church

Appendix 1 Wolverhampton Catholics 1668

Appendix 2 The House

Church Plan

Photograph of the Church and Chapel Yard 1870

O.S. Map 1919

Acknowledgements

Bibliography

# A Short History of Catholicism in Wolverhampton

St Peter's and St Paul's Church is the oldest Roman Catholic Church in England, that is, it was created during, and just after the Reformation at sometime in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. The Chapel of the Giffard town house, which was originally just for the Giffard family and their servants was now opened to Recusant worshippers ("Recusants" were people who remained Catholic in the face of persecution). Prior to this of course everyone was a Catholic and they went to St. Peter's Church, standing proudly on the highest point of the town. St Peter's Church now became the Established Church of the new Protestant religion. The old "Papist" believers worshipped in the small chapel hidden behind other buildings that could only be approached through an archway, (as you can see in the photograph and on the maps at the end of the guide). This state of affairs lasted for a long time, in fact into the 1950s and 1960s. The elderly parishioners who were born in the parish can remember some of these houses and the people who lived in them, and, of course they went to the Catholic School which was approached through the Arch and then round the western end of the Church. There were also small buildings used as businesses and factories. At one time there was also an orchard but now everything floats in our imagination above the Ring Road.

In the 17th century there were a large number of Roman Catholics in Wolverhampton. The town was known as "Little Rome", which was meant as an insult. (There is a list of Recusants who lived in Wolverhampton on 13th February 1667/8 as Appendix 1). Local gentry who remained Catholic were, the Giffards, the Levesons (pronounced "Looson") and the Whitgreaves. The Giffards of Chillington Hall are the ones who were more involved with St. Peter and St. Paul's Church. The Giffards owned two town houses in Wolverhampton, one was in Cock Street (now called Victoria Street, I have always wanted it to be on the site of The Giffard Public House but I'm almost certainly wrong), and one in Tup Street (sometimes Goat Street) and now North Street, and this of course is our Presbytery and our Church. The

Giffards used them both as homes for spinsters or widowed sisters and daughters, who cared for priests and monks and travelling Catholics. In the house in Tup Street there was a Chapel built inside so that it was hidden from searching outsiders, and of course it was designed to keep the occupants safe as they could be put to death for being Catholic. For example, during the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot two Catholics were executed in High Green, (we know it as Queen's Square). It was of course very dangerous to be a Catholic during the Civil Wars, and in Cromwell's Commonwealth, Catholics were not only on the losing Cavalier side, they were also members of a hated religion. The Church does have a Recusant Chalice from this period which is still used at Mass.

After the Restoration in 1660 life was, on the surface, slightly easier for Catholics but this security was very precarious. For example, later in the seventeenth century, in 1678, in the reign of Charles II, there was the Titus Oates persecution. Titus Oates was a fanatical Protestant who invented a "Papist Plot" he said: "Catholics want to assassinate King Charles". Consequently a lot of anti-Catholic demonstrations and riots were encouraged. Two Jesuit Priests were arrested in Wolverhampton, Father Gavin was executed in London and Father Atkins died in Stafford Prison. Peter Giffard was also arrested but survived and a local priest, William Ironmonger was also executed. There were more riots when the last Catholic king James II fled the country in 1688 and William of Orange and his wife Mary became the rulers. The Chapel in Giffard House was attacked and the priest's vestments burnt.

When Catholic life became safer in the early 18th century a new house was built on the site of the old one in North Street and that is the one that can now be seen, it was completed in 1728 (see the short description of the cost of the building in Appendix 2). It is often said that it was designed by Francis Smith, but there is no actual proof of this.

The Catholic Relief Acts of 1778 and 1791 led to more tolerance (see the entry on Bishop Milner's Wall Brass); and in 1829 The Catholic Emancipation Act gave Catholics the same Right to Vote as Protestants. There were still anti Catholic movements in the nineteenth century; they were mostly directed against Irish immigrants, who fled from the Irish Potato Famine which lasted

from 1845 to 1851. By 1851 it was estimated that the Irish represented one person in eight of the population of Wolverhampton. Most of these immigrants lived in an area of Wolverhampton by the Stafford Road, it was a place of small, closely packed houses called "Caribee Island", it is now all demolished, and has become car parks and the Ring Road. The Irish were happy to live there as they were all together and able to speak Gaelic and practice their Religion but their alien (that is, different) customs both annoyed and frightened the local population who thought that they would destroy the English way of life, (the same erroneous opinions are held today about Islam).

There are often reports in the Wolverhampton Chronicle of Irishmen arrested and charged with fighting. Various people came to the town to give talks on "Papal Aggression". In 1858 an anti-Catholic named Andre Massena (he also called himself Baron de Camin) arrived and gave a series of talks at the Corn Exchange on the 28th, 29th and 30th of June 1858. He spoke about: "The Jesuits", "Nuns and the Inquisition", and "Confession". The Irish reacted violently and several thousand people, both Catholic and Protestant, fought with each other and shouted insults at the speakers. The Police, Yeomanry and Special Constables were called and they managed to restore order. The ring leader, or at least the "man charged" was Patrick Flaherty and the Judge at his Trial, Mr Justice Hill, was lenient and said that this trouble could not be described as a riot and he was sentenced to be bound over to keep the peace. A few anti Papists proposed to form a Wolverhampton Protestant Alliance but they couldn't get enough people interested, so times were getting to be more understanding and tolerant. In fact in 1863 John Hawksford became the first Catholic Mayor of Wolverhampton (see his Wall Plaque for more information.) Sadly "Anti-Popery was not yet over as in 1867 a man called William Murphy gave a series of lectures against the Roman Catholic Church and the Irish in general, ironic, considering his probable Irish ancestry. He chose to do this at the Agricultural Hall (Wilkinson's shop is now built on the site opposite to the Central Library). He managed to get a reasonable audience; unfortunately a large crowd of Irishmen smashed the windows. The Police were injured by flying glass, and to allow the lecture to continue the Volunteer Soldiers arrived and drove the crowd back. While this was going on the Irish were attacking Protestant houses and shops. To keep order in the town the Mayor arranged

for more Policemen to come from Stafford and also a detachment of the 9th Hussars. Murphy completed his "talk", on the lines of "we want no Popish mummary here", and "if they worship bread they should be burnt at the stake". Murphy came back to Wolverhampton later in the year to give evidence at the trial of a bookseller — a Mr Scott, who was being prosecuted for selling copies of Murphy's lecture.

Murphy then met some Irishmen who hit him, knocked him to the ground and kicked him until the Police were able to come to his rescue. When he recovered he went up to South Shields and performed the same bigoted speech and caused similar riots.

After this life settled down, the Catholic Church had founded five schools by 1878 and there were 1,648 children studying in them in the town.

Everything became peaceful, one of these children who lived in Exchange Street, went to the Sisters of Mercy Convent School, her name was Margaret Tate, she became the famous Opera Singer Maggie Teyte, a Dame of the British Empire.

Apart from a few local but reasonably civilised arguments this was as good as religious and race relations could get.

Today the Parish Priest works with other denominations at both the University and at the Parish level.

# The Church (A short history of the building that we see today)

The Church was built in stages, as we have seen; there was first the Chapel, built as a room in the rear of the house. This Chapel was then extended in 1743 and decorated in 1765. Bishop Milner, an important figure in the emancipation of Catholics lived in Giffard House from 1804 to his death in 1826. His brass memorial designed by Pugin is in the Nave and the Bishop's grave is in the Crypt, he was originally buried in the orchard. (A short biography is given in the description of his brass memorial) In 1826 the Chapel was again extended to the design of Joseph Ireland and the Nave was completed and opened for worship in 1828; approximately 60 Priests attended the inauguration. The side Chapels dedicated to Our Lady and the Sacred Heart were not yet built and as it was hidden by the surrounding buildings and only approached by an archway from the road outside. It was reasonably impregnable as far as burglars were concerned. In James Quirke's M.A. Thesis he quotes a fascinating letter written in defence of one Ann Williams in 1831 at the London Criminal Court she was facing charges of attempted robbery at the Church. James Peck wrote the following letter in her defence, the spelling is his and not mine (nor James Quirke's).

"As for Ennybody thinking to crack into that place, the might as well think of cracking into Newgate as there is no windows hall around this chapel. It consists of skuy lites and there is but one door, the have got to pass through two more doors which is very strong bard on the inside. It is a thing impossable to think about getting into that place without being found out."

I do not know the outcome of the trial.

Two side Chapels were then added; the Sacred Heart Chapel, (or South Chapel), designed by Edward Goldie in 1901 he also designed the Sacristy wing. In 1928 the Lady Chapel (or North Chapel) was built designed by Sandy and Norris. Oddly enough this made the Church more vulnerable to burglars as there was now a window to break and then enter. This has actually happened

during the early part of this, the 21st Century. The thieves on that occasion managed to start a fire in the Sacristy.

The Church, and the School remained as a vibrant centre until 1962 when Father Kavanagh discovered that Wolverhampton Council wished to demolish it. This was not an anti-Catholic move; in the 1960s both local Government and National Government seemed to have an obsession with modernity, they almost had a "Science Fiction" outlook in their planning decisions. There was a vision of long fast roads, flyovers, zoned areas for shops, factories, houses and offices. People should not be allowed to live in an area where there was a factory, churches shouldn't operate where there could be a large modern Administrative area. Councillor F. Clapham, the Chair of the Planning Committee wanted a new Civic Centre built on the site of the Church, (incidentally he did intend to build us a new school and Church, in Whitmore Reans, he was not a bigot). Father Kavanagh organised a committee composed of both Catholics and non Catholics, Councillor Fletcher, Councillor Stokes and Miss Reidy were members (some of you may remember Miss Reidy, she taught at the Girl's High School and came to our Church). The Planning Application was defeated.

This was not the end of the matter, in 1967 the Ring Road marched towards us, everything that could be demolished was demolished; for example we were assured that our Graveyard was safe but 42 bodies were disinterred and moved to Jeffcock Road so that a new retaining wall could be built. It was then discovered that the Church roof had dry rot and scaffolding was erected. Father Molloy was now the Priest and he was forced to say Mass in the school hall. In July 1967 the Wolverhampton Express and Star reported that the house was not affected by the dry rot, which was a good thing as it made demolition a little more difficult to arrange. The Archdiocese then applied for a demolition order as they thought that the cost of repair was too high and they also conjectured that no one would come as: "the Church is cut off by the Ring Road and the Parishioner's homes were quite far from the town centre". We were going to have a new Church built, possibly in Gatis Street, Whitmore Reans. The money would come from selling the land where the Church and the House stood and an office block could be built on the site. This time

Wolverhampton Council and a new Church Committee worked together and the proposal for demolition was rejected in 1982 by the Secretary of State for the Environment (Michael Heseltine). Grants were obtained from the Council and from English Heritage. The Appeal Secretary was Birmingham University Librarian Anthony Nicholls (whose normal Church is St. Mary and St John). Appropriately Peter Giffard of Chillington was as involved as his ancestors had been. Father Joyce was the Priest at this time and organised every thing successfully; It all ended happily when Maurice Couve de Murville became the new Archbishop of Birmingham.

By 2006 it was obvious that a complete refurbishment of the Church was needed, the walls were dirty, plaster was falling, parts of the roof leaked, everything looked tired and forlorn, the Altar seemed to be a wooden box, even the Lady Chapel Altar was not appropriate when it was used as the High Altar.

The Church received a large amount of money from the Will of the Armstrong brothers (see the Plaque in the Church Porch), Father Patrick Daly organised a Finance Committee under the guidance of Brian Middleton (and then Mrs Betty Green when Brian became ill); work then commenced, Bill Finnegan helped to co-ordinate the craftsmen. Others also gave money, both large and small amounts, and the Church you see today is the result of this generosity and the hard work of the craftsmen and the organising committee. The architect was Stephen Oliver who worked with everyone to make sure that all the new designs were as perfect as possible. The project was co-ordinated by Father Patrick Daly.

# The Guide to the Church, the Crucifix, the Altars, Statues, Brasses, Plaques, Paintings, Windows Font and Organ

As we approach the Church it presents a reasonably dull aspect, an anonymous colour, not many windows and it hangs over the Ring Road with a car park to the left. Over the door there are two statues, St. Peter (with keys) and St. Paul (with a sword), they both seem to have large hands and long arms. To the left of the door there is a Blue Plaque to Bishop Milner, who is buried inside.

## The Porch

The first things that you see when entering the Church Porch are the Notice Boards, a picture of the Pope and two marble plaques, one is in Latin and the other shows the names of the generous Armstrong family who left money to the Church so that it could be refurbished to the high standard you can see today. The Latin is an inscription recording the consecration of the new Altar and the re-dedication of the Church.

The Latin Inscription:

BENEDICTI PP XVI PONTIFICATUS ANNO V  
SEDE ARCHIEPISCOPALI BIRMINGHAMIENSI VACANTE  
PATRICIO HUGONE DALY XI ABHINC ANNOS RECTORE  
CREATO DIE FESTO SS PETRI ET PAULI XXIX JUNII  
ANNO MMIX ECCLESIA HAEC NOVO ALTARI ATQUE  
SUPPELECTILI LATE ORDINATA A REVERENDISSIMO  
DOMINO PHILIPPO PARGETER EPISCOPO TITULARI  
VALENTINIANENSI ATQUE HUIUS DIOECESIS  
ANTISTITIS AUXILIARI DENUO DEDICATA EST

The Translation of the Latin Inscription in the Porch:

On the 5th year of the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI the Diocese of Birmingham became vacant, in the 11th year of Patrick Hugh Daly's term as parish priest, on the Feast of SS Peter and Paul, 29 June 2009, this new altar was consecrated and this church re-dedicated by Philip Pargeter, Auxiliary Bishop of Birmingham, titular Bishop of Valentinian.

The stairs to your left lead up to the Organ Loft.

(There is more on the organ later)

We now enter the main part of the Church.

## The Nave of the Church

The first thing that catches our attention as we look down the Nave towards the Altar is the magnificent Crucifix created for this Church by the sculptor Rory Young. Then we turn to the soaring columns, the old High Altar; the new marble Altar, Tabernacle and Ambo; the Paintings, the Statues and the plaques on the walls, in particular the large one on the centre of the right hand wall and of course the new Font to our left.

## The Font

The Font is modern, it was installed just before Easter 2012; the design is by the Architect Stephen Oliver, it was made by Fairhaven and Woods and the Silver Bowl was created by Des. McCarthy of Avon Silversmiths. The Font was paid for by donations from the parishioners. The large candle at the side is always lit and present at all Baptisms; it is also moved to the Altar at funerals. The candle is renewed at the Easter Vigil each year.

Before we look down the main body of the Church we turn and look westwards through the window at the sky, sometimes during the evening Mass the sunset adds a glorious dimension to the Service; we can also see that Wolverhampton, surprisingly, has a large and wonderful collection of trees.

There are two statues, on the right of the window is Saint Antony of Padua and to the left is Saint Therese of Lisieux, this was the first statue of the saint in this country.

On the wall on the right, sadly, slightly obscured by a pew; there is a Stone Plaque to Rachel Hodgkins, She was 12 when she died on the 25th March 1879; she lived at 77, King Street, Wolverhampton. Her Death Certificate registered her as Lucy Rachel Hodgkins. Her father John was in business as a Packer, her mother's name was Sarah.

As we look along the walls of the Nave towards the Altar steps we see a series of Brass Plaques, Pictures, wooden Stations of the Cross and an old High Altar

The first Brass Plaque on the right is to Mary Stanton, she was born in Walsall Street in 1831 and died at 16, Clifton Street on 7th March 1909, there are a number of Plaques and a Stained Glass Window dedicated to the Stanton family.

Opposite, on the left hand wall is a Brass Plaque to James Cremonini and Selina Cremonini. James was born in Switzerland and he came to Wolverhampton to join a relative named Peter Cremonini. James married Selina in Sedgley and then they lived at 8, Oxford Street. He died on the 23rd April 1894 and Selina on the 27th April 1893. The Cremonini family made barometers, telescopes, furniture, ornamental mirrors and picture frames, their work was to a very high standard. The family became rich enough to warrant the word "gent" after their name. They gradually moved away from the centre of the town and lived in one of the large houses in Waterloo Terrace, Newhampton Road. In 1896 Anthony Cremonini was a Stock and Share Broker in Queen's Street. A Miss Cremonini was a leading member of the committee that helped Belgian refugees in 1914. Peter Cremonini had a son who has a Stone Plaque at the entrance to the Sacred Heart Altar, he also paid for the gates at that Altar. Descendants of the family still live in the city.

We now come to the largest and most ornate Brass Plaque in the Church; designed by Pugin; it is a memorial to John Milner, when he died, he was buried in the, now non-existent orchard. He was then re-interred in the Crypt

where his grave can still be seen. John Milner was a Bishop and the Vicar Apostolic of the Midland District.

Born and baptised John Miller on the 14th October 1752 in London, his parents were Joseph and Helen Miller, the family originally came from Lancashire and his father was a tailor by trade. Sadly his father went insane and disappeared from his life.

When he was 9 in 1761 he was sent away to school, to the Franciscans in Edgbaston, by this time his name had become "Milner", no one seems to know why his name was changed or in fact if his original entry had been spelt wrongly on his Baptismal Certificate. He left Edgbaston in 1765 and went to Sedgley Park School. As he wished to become a priest he left Sedgley after one year and, at the age of sixteen he went to the English College at Douai, becoming a Deacon on the 1st June 1776 and a Priest on the 20 December 1776. He studied Latin, Greek, Mathematics, and History and then progressed to Philosophy and Theology; his scholarship was rewarded by being appointed a Doctor of Divinity by Douai. The Revolution had of course started in France on the 14th July 1776 but fortunately for the future Bishop he returned to England on May 1777 and was put in charge of the Priest's Library at a house in Gray's Inn, London. Bishop Challoner, who was his superior, recognised his abilities, and gave him a wide amount of experiences as a "jobber", that is, he did a large amount of varied "Priestly" work. He was so successful that he was chosen to preach at Bishop Challoner's Requiem. In 1779 he went as a Priest to Winchester and stayed there until 1803. He was finally appointed to be a Bishop and moved to Staffordshire in 1804 and he lived at Longbirch near to Brewood (this can still be seen). His full title was Vicar Apostolic of the Midland District and Titular Bishop of Castabala (in Turkey). His final move was to Giffard House, North Street, Wolverhampton, in fact the house we can see today. Here the Holy Oils were consecrated on each Maundy Thursday; Ordinations took place, and every three years the Clergy of the Midlands would come to meet their Bishop, so, in a way St. Peter and St. Paul's Church almost acted as a Cathedral. In 1822 there were 100 Priests in the area, 47 of them were English Secular Priests, 20 were French émigrés, who had fled from the Revolution and 33 were from various Religious Orders.



In 1808 Milner had a certain amount of trouble from some Catholic business men in Birmingham who sponsored a Chapel dedicated to St. Chad (it eventually became the Cathedral), they demanded that, as they had paid for the building they deserved the right to appoint the Priest instead of leaving it to the Church and the Bishop. Milner resisted this, saying, "I've got rid of the officious country gentlemen and now the nouveau riche want to replace them". He of course won. Other controversies arose from the Catholic Emancipation Laws and the position of both Catholics and Priests in a developing industrial society. Cardinal Newman, whilst at school and thinking about both Calvinistic and Evangelical Christianity, read Milner's "History of the Church of Christ" and it influenced his later decision on conversion.

Milner became ill in 1824, in his diary he wrote: "Aug.5. My first great paralytic attack, this day, at Lutterworth". He died on the afternoon of the 19th April 1826. He was buried in the orchard at Giffard house but he was exhumed and re-buried in the Crypt of the Church his grave can still be seen. In the book "The Eve of Catholic Emancipation" by Monsignor Bernard Ward (1912). The author describes the reason for his disinterment. "A man of principle buried outside the Church, where he remained for some fifty years. At the end of this time he had to be exhumed in order to extend the Church. Advantage was taken to open the coffin, when the body was found perfectly incorrupt; but the atmosphere soon affected it. The late Canon George Duckett of Wolverhampton who supervised the removal, has described these facts in the presence of the writer." Milner was a man of determined beliefs, he managed to disagree with almost every other bishop. But his intransigence did lead to a better Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829, which superseded those of 1813 and 1821. His arguments meant that there were 20 years of dissension amongst the Bishops of England, Scotland and Ireland but they did lead to a more successful Catholic Church.

Opposite to the Bishop's Plaque is the Old High Altar it was moved in the 1980s when the Church was previously refurbished. In the Sacristy there is a charming wedding photograph of two parishioners kneeling in front of it on their wedding day; (they are both still with us, the young lady is Mrs Betty Green, the Finance Committee Chair).

The Altar is still used during the Easter Vigil, it also has a book showing the names of the parish benefactors and the Sacramental Oils are kept there.

The next Brass Plaque is for John Stanton the son of Mary and Joseph, he was a Locksmith who specialised in Gun Locks. He married another Mary and lived at 16, Clifton Street His small factory was at 13, Clifton Street, where he employed two other workmen. He died on the 15th June 1879.

Opposite to him is a Brass Plaque to Joseph Guisani and Mary Guisani. Joseph was a carver, a gilder, an engraver and an inlayer of clock and barometer cases, he also manufactured theodolites; Mary was his wife. They originally lived at 27, Victoria Street, then they moved to 69, Victoria Street. Joseph died on the 27th February 1886 and Mary on the 29th August 1900. (A Peter Guisani worked and lived in High Green (Queen's Square) at about the same time.)

To the right hand side of the Altar steps there is another Stanton Brass Plaque, it is for Mary and Joseph Stanton; Mary was born circa 1796 and Joseph circa 1800, they lived in Tower Street, he was a Master Locksmith, he employed a number of workers. Mary died on the 6th July 1872 and Joseph on the 16th January 1877.

To the left of the Altar Steps is a Brass Plaque to Ann Green she was born in 1815 in Priestfield, she later became a lodging house keeper at 214, Salop Street. She died on the 16th February 1876.

Looking back from the Altar steps we can see five paintings, the main one is over the Old High Altar, it is a painting of Saint Thomas examining the wounds on Jesus' Body, it was painted by Joseph Barney in 1784 and it is called Christ appearing to Saint Thomas. Barney was a very good local painter in the second half of the eighteenth century, he studied under Angelica Kaufmann and Antonio Zucchi. He exhibited at the Royal Academy and painted fruit and flower decorations for George III and he was also the Drawing Master at the Royal Military Academy. He eventually moved back to Wolverhampton and painted this picture. He also painted The Deposition of Our Lord from

the Cross which can be seen in St. John's Church. He designed Jappanned Trays and with the help of Matthew Boulton at the Soho Factory in Birmingham he developed a technique for creating large pictures of Saints , six of these can be seen in the Church — St. Matthew to the left of the Old High Altar; Saint Luke to the right, opposite to them are Saint Mark and Saint John, Saint Peter and Saint Paul can be seen on either side of the new High Altar. The painting technique was called Mechanical Painting, it seemed to entail Barney drawing an outline and then different coloured paints were printed on to it and apprentices then added some details and Barney completed them. A number of these pictures can be seen in English Churches.

We can round off our idiosyncratic look at the Nave by looking at the rather charming wooden carvings arranged along the left and right hand walls; they are the fourteen Stations of the Cross, they represent Our Lord's Final journey to his death.

They are:

- I. Jesus is Condemned to Death.
- II. Jesus receives the Cross.
- III. Jesus falls for the first time under His Cross.
- IV. Jesus is met by His Blessed Mother.
- V. The Cross is laid upon Simon of Cyrene.
- VI. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.
- VII. Jesus falls for the Second Time.
- VIII. The women of Jerusalem mourn Our Lord.
- IX. Jesus falls for the Third Time.
- X. Jesus is stripped of His Garments.
- XI. Jesus is nailed to the Cross.
- XII. Jesus dies on the Cross.
- XIII. Jesus is taken down from the Cross.
- XIV. Jesus is placed in the Sepulchre.

The Stations were originally thought of by St. Francis of Assisi so that ordinary but poor people, would be able to go on a pilgrimage without leaving their Church.

We now go up the Altar steps and turn to the right towards the Sacristy door but first there is another Brass Plaque and quite an important one as well. I should have pointed out that although the design on the Plaques looks rather medieval, it is actually a stylised image created in the Hardman factory, this is not how the people looked in reality.

The first Brass Plaque we come to is for John Hawksford (as usual his name is sometimes written as John Hawkesford). He was born in Aston Juxta, Warwickshire in 1807, (It's the Aston of Aston Hall and Aston Villa), "Juxta" means "next to", (in this case next to Birmingham). At the age of 13 he left his home in Aston and moved to Wolverhampton. He was apprenticed as a clerk to Mr Price (or Mr Pryce) a Wolverhampton Attorney/Solicitor at 10, Chapel Street, (this sounds as though he is in a novel by Dickens). He then qualified and worked as a Solicitor with a Mr Chrees, at 17, King Street. His main employment was to be in charge of the legal management of the estates of the Duke of Cleveland. Mr Chrees died and Hawksford became the partner of Mr Manby(whose name was, until recently, still part of a Wolverhampton Legal Practice). He became a Catholic when he married. He now practised from 6, Darlington Street. From 1863 to 1864 Hawksford was elected as Mayor of Wolverhampton becoming the first Catholic Mayor since the Reformation.. He was involved in buying the land for St Mary and St John's Church (originally known as St Marie and St John); he paid for the fencing and ground preparation. He was the Executor of the Will of a Catholic lady, a Mrs Bowden. She left money for the Church at Snowhill to be built; unfortunately the Bishop of Birmingham, Bishop Ullathorne, said that the money was meant to go to the good of the Church as a whole and not just one particular Parish. He added that the lady had not put her wishes in writing so what her Executor said, might not be true. John Hawkesford disputed this and proceedings almost got to court. Instead Hawkesford wrote letters about the state of the Church as he saw it, that is, he emphasised, in his opinion," the mess the Clergy were making," he was inclined to be arrogant, "Only Hawksford could be correct", thought Hawksford!

He said that Sunday Schools were being closed; and children "only allowed to grow in ignorance". The Boy's School allowed "to dwindle" because it was "starved of cash". Even though he was the Mayor of the town and one of the

initiators of the Church building he was forbidden from entering the new Church. The Priest at St. Mary and St. John was told to eject him. Hawksford's reply was to buy up as many of the Pews that he could and label them with fictitious names; in mid Victorian times, until comparatively recently, this was allowed, no one, apart from the named people were able to sit in these pews. So a lot of seats were empty and the congregation had to stand. Eventually a compromise was arrived at but Hawksford obviously changed his allegiance back to St. Peter's and St. Paul's Church.

He lived with his family at 182, Penn Road. He was married twice, first to Mary Hawksford, (see the Brass Plaque opposite) by whom he fathered two children, Robert and Catherine; Mary died in 1841. He then married Emma Hawksford a lady from Claverley. Emma had a son Francis who also became a solicitor.

Mary Hawkesford was the first wife of John, sadly the date of her death on her brass does not seem to be correct! She was born in 1811, she had a son Robert in 1839 who went on to become a solicitor and a daughter, Catherine in 1841 and Mary died during this birth.

As we leave John Hawksford's Plaque, we pass a door that leads to the Sacristy, the Vestments are kept here. The corridor leads on to the boy's Sacristy, a lavatory and stairs which go up to the Guild Room. The children meet here on Sunday mornings before rejoining mass; coffee and tea are also served in there after Sunday Mass and other meetings are held, such as Prayer Meetings and when Father Daly was our Priest a Passover meal was served and eaten in there. The Advent and Lent talks were also given by Father Daly.

The Sacristy wing and the Sacred Heart Chapel of the Church were designed by Edward Goldie in 1901.

We are now in the Sacred Heart Chapel the first thing that can be seen is the Confessional which is a very private place. Over it is a round almost baroque Crucifix, supplied by Hardman. Moving on is another Brass Plaque, this one is slightly mysterious, it is dedicated to John Burke and Margaret Burke, John died on the 10th June 1902 and Margaret on the 19th February 1903. In the

Register of Deaths there is no entry for John, the only Burke who attended the Church at this time was a regular soldier who organised the local Yeomanry Regiment, I can only conclude that he died overseas. Margaret was living at 4, Court, off North Street when she died. This might have been one of the houses in the courtyard of the Church.

A large window now presents itself, it is stained glass and it represents The Resurrection, it is another of the memorials to the ubiquitous Stanton family; this is for William Stanton who was born in 1825 and died in January 1881. I presume it was paid for by his children and grandchildren when the Sacred Heart Chapel was built in 1901.

The Stantons, or at least some of them, must have emigrated to Australia at sometime in the Twentieth Century, as their descendents have visited the Church during Father Daly's time as Parish Priest.

Before we get to the Sacred Heart Altar there is another Brass Plaque it is in memory of Canon Duckett, he was the Priest at the Church from 1851 until his death on the 5th May 1898. George Duckett was born in Preston (circa) 1823; his father was Richard, his mother Mary and he had one sister and two brothers, he was educated at Sedgley and Oscott. A priest in one Parish for 47 years, he must have been well known and possibly well liked. He also had interest in the Irish Independence movement, or at least the aspects of it that related to the Church. He said that he knew the Irish politician O'Connell and claimed that one of the chairs in the house had belonged to him. He also never actually left the Church as he is buried in a wall of the Crypt, there is a small window where he could be viewed.

## The Sacred Heart Altar

This ornate late Victorian Altar was not made specifically for the Church, like the circular Crucifix opposite it was supplied by a manufacturer who specialised in the ornate, Hardmans are an example of this type of work. The Altar was mostly paid for by the man whose name appears just below the Statue of Jesus, that is, Henry Spink. The Spink family had a large Locksmith's

factory, - "Joshua Spink and Son"; they employed 93 people at the end of the 19th century. The factory was at 155, Lower Stafford Street. The Spink family lived at 156, Lower Stafford Street originally, and then they moved to 19, Waterloo Road South and then as they got richer they moved to Ivanhoe, Waterloo Road North. Their descendants emigrated to America, some of them have returned to see the Church.

Francisci Cremonini's memorial can be seen by the small gate; he was born in 1840 in Queen Street, Wolverhampton, like the other Italian families he was also a maker of beautiful barometer and clock cases. He died in 1908.

## The High Altar

We now walk to the High Altar, on our way we pass the door that leads into the Priest's House. Both the Church and the High Altar are dominated by the Crucifix.

The Crucifix was designed and made by the Sculptor Rory Young, he carved the image in wood and then pressed aluminium over it, he also added gold and silver leaf. It is called Christus Triumphans, that is, the Triumph of Christ. Most images of Christ on the Cross concentrate on the pain that He suffered; this one shows us the peace and love of God. When the Church was being re-ordered Father Daly still said Mass each day, mostly in the Guild Room. A rule was created (not by Father Daly) that we should not look at the Crucifix until it was officially unveiled. So I (in a fit of disobedience) took an elderly lady into the Church to see the sculpture, I'm glad that I did. She was so moved, she looked at it, burst into tears and said, "It is Our Lord, he's embracing all of us, it's wonderful."

In the Sanctuary the new marble Altar, Tabernacle, Ambo (or lectern) and the Credence Table were all carved by a very skilled member of the Art Worker's Guild — Kate Worthington of Worthington Stone Carving.

As we move towards the Lady Chapel we see one more Brass Plaque, it is for Winifred Brown who was born circa 1775 at 6, Goldthorne Hill, she married the owner of a Public House in High Green (now Queen's Square). She died a

widow on the 6th March 1862 at Chapel Yard, North Street, (that is one of the houses that stood by the Church).

We look up and see a baroque St Michael killing the devil with gold tipped spear,

Before we reach the Lady Chapel, there is a door that leads down to the Crypt, and at the foot of the stairs we can see the simple but impressive tomb of Bishop Milner. Some of his Vestments have also been preserved and can be seen. And of course we can look at what remains of Canon Duckett.

## The Lady Chapel

The Lady Chapel, designed by Sandy and Norris in 1928, it is loved by a lot of the parishioners as a place for quiet prayer, and, as a place to say a contemplative Rosary. There are three striking Stained Glass Windows, they were made by Hardman and show three aspects of the Biblical King David. On the left he is shown as David as a King and as a Soldier; in the centre he is the Vine of Jesse that leads to Jesus (sometimes called "A Jesse Window"); on the right he is David the musician. There is also a charming small circular patterned window. On the Lady Chapel Altar there is new sculpture of Mary holding the Child Jesus; it is a modern sculpture which was designed by Tomasz Kaszura, a Polish student attending Wolverhampton University. The bronze statue was made by the Maltese Sculptor Carmel Cauchi. Its construction was made possible by a bequest from Eugene and Martin Lambert.

The re-ordering of the Church was completed in 2009. The Architect was Stephen Oliver of Rodney Melville and Partners, Chartered Architects of Leamington Spa. It was all made possible by the generosity of John and Alfred Armstrong and the vision of the Parish Priest Father Patrick Daly, who gathered a team of helpers under the guidance of Betty Green (the Chair of the Finance Committee). The work was carried out by the local firm Partons.

The completed work received The President's Award of the Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association in 2009. The Ceremony was in Westminster Hall.

Sadly we must end on a note that should perhaps be the project of the next Parish Priest. That is the restoration of the Organ, which can be seen in the loft at the top of the balcony. It is a Parsons' Organ and was probably built by George Parsons about 1829. At the same time he restored the Renatus Harris instrument in St. John's, Wolverhampton, and built the Organ at St Leonard's in Bilston.

The organ is still playable and sounds fine to my untutored ears but it does need some tender loving care.

It is now September 2013 and, after a number of delightful and efficient supply priests, (the Fathers from Saint Mary and St John, Father Peter Madden and Father Charles Miller) we welcome Monsignor Mark Crisp as our Parish Priest, he has already made an excellent impression on the congregation, with his love of music and singing and his desire to involve all of us in the life of the Church.

## Appendix 1

### Wolverhampton Catholics 13th February 1668

Robert Mousely and Elizabeth his wife	Eleanor Bill, widow	Catherine, wife of Evan Sutton
Mary Butler	Mary, wife of Christopher Barron	Mary Leighton
Mirabel Endsworth Edward Gifford and his wife	Joyce Williams, widow	Mary, wife of Thomas Nock
Anne Halfehead	John Person and Mary, his wife	John Freeman and Anne, his wife
John Sutton	Margaret Andrews, dead	Sampson Erdswick and Elizabeth, his wife
Joan Harwell	Margaret Allott, widow	Mary Brinley
Margery Fytter, widow	James Harper and Anne his wife	Walter Grosvenor, armiger
William Clifton and Anne, his wife	Anthony Hickin and his wife	Anne Guest
Elizabeth Tonks, widow	Thomas Chambers and his wife	William Sharrott
Richard Tonks	William Laine and Emera, his wife	Thamos Granger and Anne, his wife
William Tonks	Mary Greene, widow	Christopher Swayle and Anne, his wife
Anne Tonks, dead	Robert Pearson	John Stanford and his wife
Anne, wife of John Ellis	Thomas Pearson	James Price
Margaret Bird, widow	Anne Turner	Richard Cox
Brigit Westly, widow	John Gifford and Mary, his wife	John Smith and Alice, his wife
George Johnson and Elizabeth, his wife	20	William Wall and Catherine, his wife
John Hodnett,	Margaret, wife of William Taylor	Thomas Wall and Anne, his wife
Bridget Prince, widow	John Nook dead	John Dibble
Thomas Westley and Mary, his wife	Jane, wife of John Fleeminge	--Paynter his wife (deleted)
Edward Stoddard and Elizabeth, his wife	Eleanor Windsor, widow	Adam Barfoote
Ralph Buckley	Thomas Windsor, and his wife	William Syddon
Catherine Gifford, widow, and Anne and Catherine, her daughters	Mary Pilkington, widow	
Thomas Croydon	Thomas Gifford,	
	Augustine Gifford	

## Appendix 2

# The House

(The House is not open to the public as it is a private residence.)

The house that we see today was built from 1727 to 1729; it replaced an earlier house for which there is neither an illustration nor a description. The eighteenth century house was used for the same purpose as the previous one; that is, it housed priests and relatives of the Giffard family. The Chapel was built into the rear of the house and its privacy was guarded by the surrounding "Giffard owned" buildings and the arch way that survived into the last century. The size of the Chapel can be gauged today as it had approximately the same measurements as the present High Altar. The architect Francis Smith was not involved but one of his designs could have been used.

The finances for the construction plus the benefactors are quite fascinating

	£	s	d
Peter Giffard	100	0	0
Bishop Giffard	100	0	0
Sir Winsor Hunloke	10	10	0
Mr Stanford	5	5	0
Bonaventure Giffard	200	0	0
Profit of £200(?)	60	6	4
Timber sold in Wolverhampton	4	5	9
Margaret Glover (rent)	1	0	0
Mr Dicconson	76	12	5
Mrs Ann Manning	2	10	0
Mrs Eleanor White	2	8	9
Nov. 1729 Bishop Giffard	100	0	0
Sept. 1731 Cousin Giffard	105	0	0
Oct. 1731 Bishop Giffard	50	0	0
Sept. 1732 Bishop Giffard	50	0	0
Legacy 1732 Mrs Kempson	50	0	0
Total	£917	18s	3d

Nine hundred and seventeen pounds,  
eighteen shillings and three pence.

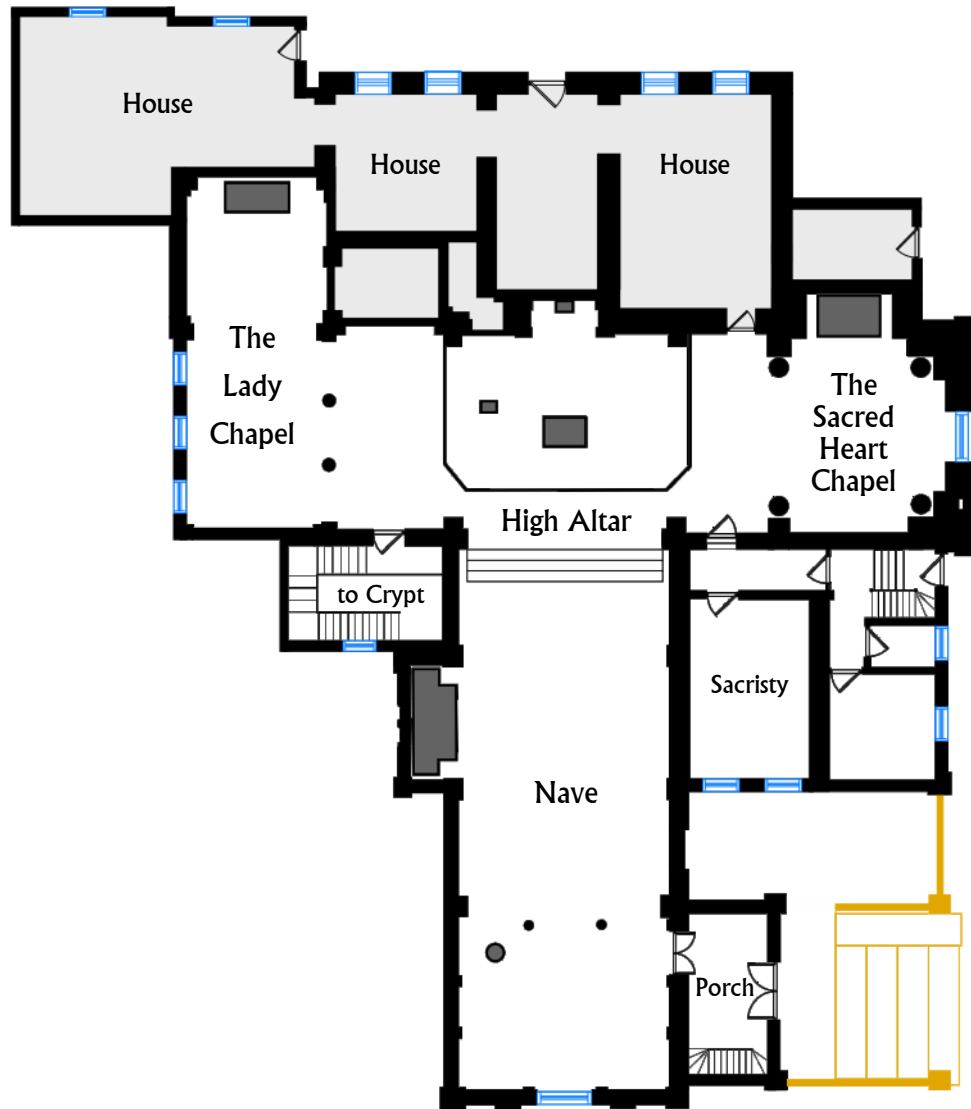
In today's money this would be equivalent to:-

Using the Retail Price Index it would be £116,156.

Using the Average Earnings Index it would be £1,670,020.

The donations of £100 would be £12,600 (R.P.I.)  
or £190,000 (Average Earnings).

## Sketch Plan of the Church



Chapel Yard, with the wall of SS. Peter and Paul Church on the left.

This photograph shows how well hidden the church originally was from North Street.



Ordnance Survey Map  
of  
Wolverhampton  
in 1919  
(the Church is outlined)





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