

The Dome of Home

Church of Saints Peter and Paul
and Saint Philomena, New Brighton



A History and Guide

Foreword

Bishop Mark Davies



The Church of Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Philomena, New Brighton is a truly outstanding building raised high on the Wirral skyline. On both sides of the Mersey it speaks of the faith and hope which first inspired its construction. I am delighted that this majestic building, having been closed as a parish church several years ago, now has a new life and mission as a Shrine Church, in the care of the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest.

Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Philomena, is now a church open daily, 8am until 8pm, and belongs in a special way to every parish in the provision of Mass and the Sacraments in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite and as a shrine for the adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist. We are indebted to the Institute of Christ the King for making this development possible. Your support is now needed if this magnificent church is to continue to be a beacon of hope on the skyline.

I warmly commend this Guide Book for Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Philomena, New Brighton, as part of the first Heritage Lottery Fund project to restore the church. I pray that not only will the beauty of this church be preserved as part of our religious and cultural heritage, but that this building will continue to serve the mission of the Church in our time and for many generations to come.

I entrust all who are associated with this Shrine to the care and protection of Our Lady, Help of Christians, patroness of the Diocese of Shrewsbury, whose beautiful statue is enthroned above the Lady Altar in the church.

Auxilium Christianorum
Ora pro nobis.

+ Mar Dav'

Right Reverend Mark Davies
Bishop of Shrewsbury

Easter 2014



James Crowley

The Shrine Church of Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Philomena, New Brighton is truly extraordinary. Built on a grand scale and on a prominent site, it has served as a local landmark since completion in 1935; but it also stands as a testament to the faith of its founder Fr. Thomas Mullins and the local Catholic community.

The quality of the architecture lies in the effective combination of innovative construction techniques of the day with well-considered use of classical styling on a monumental scale. The extreme simplicity of the interior serves as a perfect counterpoint to the lavish marble decoration of the sanctuary and side chapels with their magnificent altars. This immediately draws the attention of the worshippers to what is the central focus of the architecture, the Holy Mass. It is notable that the church has remained little altered since completion, meaning it retains the architectural cohesion intended by its original architect, Ernest Bower Norris.

Having closed in 2008 with an uncertain future, the formal re-opening of the building in 2012 gave new hope that it would continue as a place of Catholic worship. Since then the church has undergone a major four-phase programme of conservation and repair, financed by grant funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the AllChurches Trust and the National Churches Trust amongst others, as well as numerous generous donors and benefactors. No other Catholic Church in the country has undergone such a dramatic and successful transformation in recent years, and today the Shrine Church stands as an exemplary case of Catholic church restoration. The work undertaken to return it into a thriving place of worship once again is remarkable, and is due to the vision of Bishop Mark Davies, the commitment and dedicated ministry of the Canons of the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest, and the support of the faithful congregation.

James Crowley

Architectural Historian and Ecclesiastical Heritage Consultant

April 2022



New Brighton Sands, c. 1900



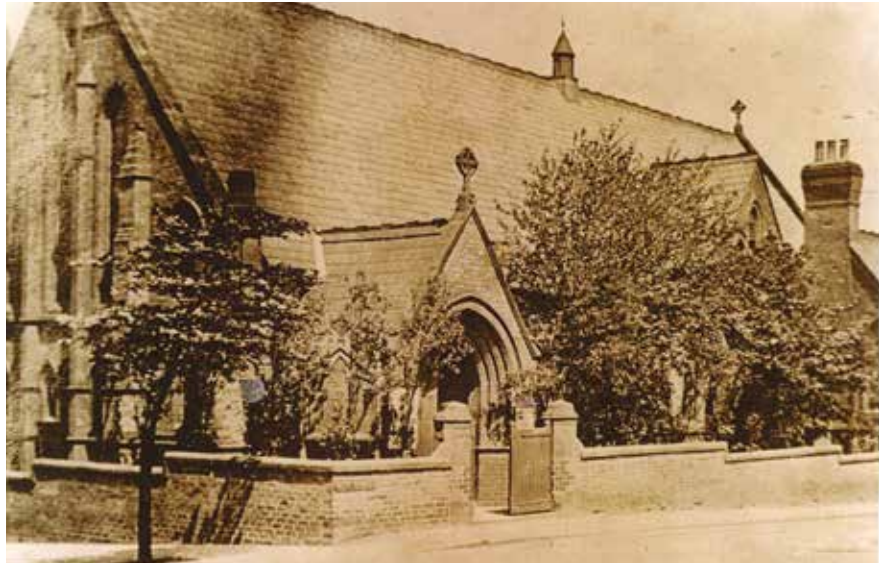
In the Beginning

New Brighton is a relatively modern creation. Until the 1830s, the area was a largely uninhabited sandy waste, part of the Manor of Liscard. The idea for a 'New Brighton' was the brainchild of Liverpool merchant, James Atherton, who purchased 170 acres of coastline to develop a high-class seaside resort. One contemporary observer described it as the 'Elysium of English Watering Places'.

At that time the Catholic Church in England was undergoing a great revival. Acts of Parliament had removed the legal discrimination against Catholics so that they could become members of Parliament, lawyers and army officers, and they could vote. Famine in Ireland in the 1840s had driven great numbers of poor Catholics to cross the Irish Sea to seek work as labourers in the factories of the Industrial Revolution.

In 1850 Pope Pius IX gave the Catholic Church in England a new structure based on local dioceses. Each diocese had its own bishop, and Wirral became part of Shrewsbury Diocese. Its bishops gave priority to school building, using education to raise future generations from their poverty. Mass was often celebrated in the schools until money was available to build churches.

The Parish of Ss. Peter and Paul, with this architectural gem as its future centrepiece, had its beginnings from St. Alban's, Liscard, in 1841. A mission at New Brighton was first established in

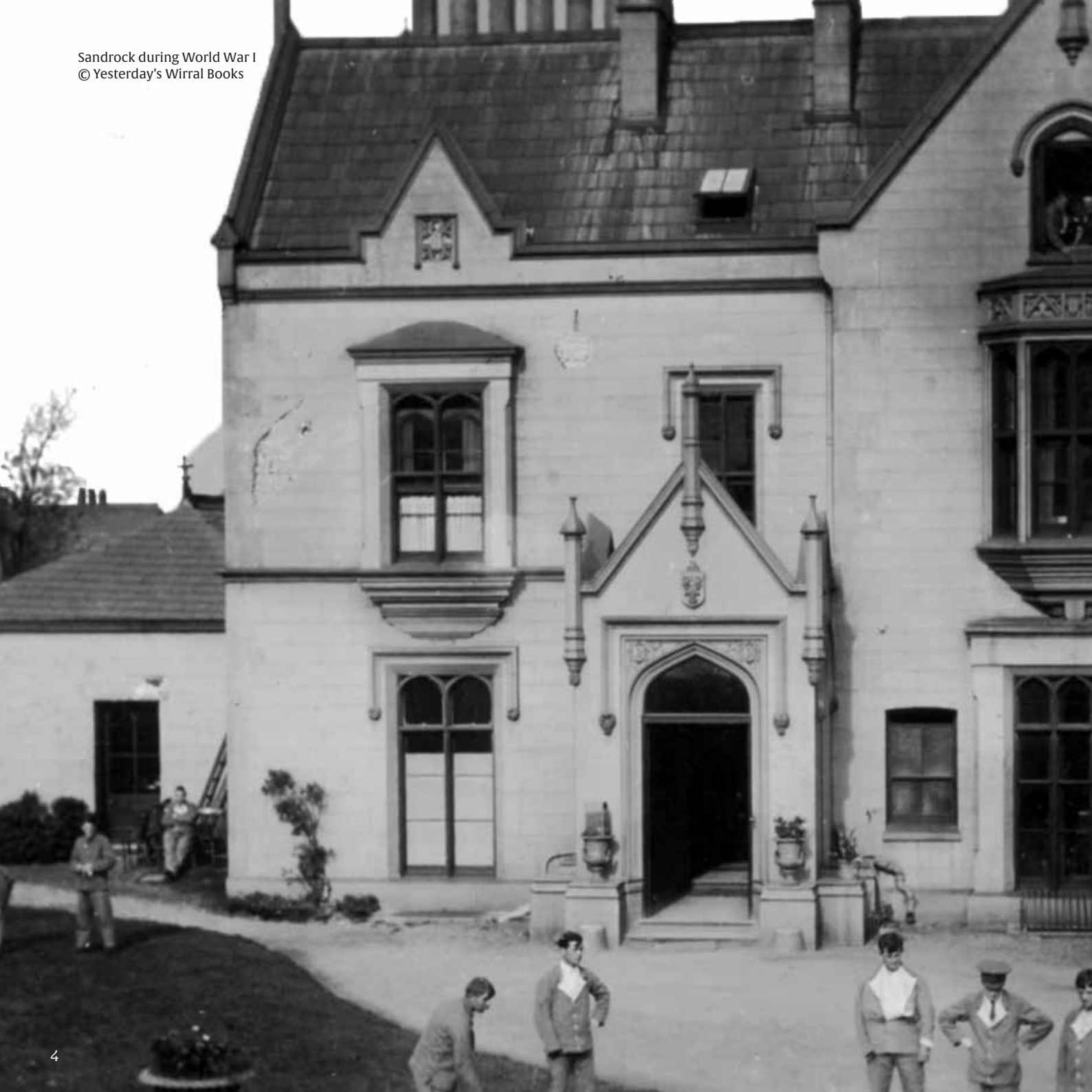


The first Catholic Parish Church in Hope Street, c.1920

1879 in a rented room in Egerton Street by Canon William Stanton, and two years later the first church was erected. This was on the corner of Rowson Street and Hope Street. The red brick Gothic-style church, designed by Edmund Kirby, was destroyed by enemy action in December 1940.

Between 1881 and 1911, the population of New Brighton increased from 11,612 to 38,659, as the town developed not only as a commuter suburb, but also as a working-class resort, with a ferry service for Liverpool day-trippers, and a tower that outstripped Blackpool in height. By 1906 it had become clear to Canon Stanton and the Bishop of Shrewsbury that a larger church would be needed. When Fr. Thomas Mullins

was appointed as rector in 1909, he made the building of a new church his personal mission and he worked tirelessly to realise it over 36 years until his death in 1945.

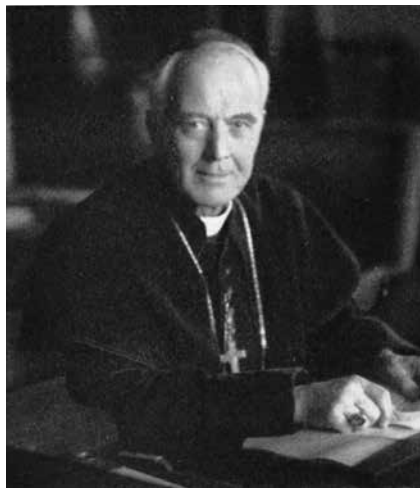


The Church

Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Philomena

The site found for the new church was at the top of Atherton Street, near St. George's Mount - the highest point in Wallasey. It was then occupied by a Gothic-style house built for a Liverpool businessman in 1845 and named Sandrock. The property had been acquired in 1911 by an enclosed religious order, the French Sisters of the Cenacle, who had mesh grilles placed on the windows. The Red Cross used the building as a hospital during World War I, where over 700 soldiers convalesced and received treatment, but after the war the Sisters moved to Wavertree and the property became derelict.

Although Fr. Mullins had originally considered a site closer to the Tower Grounds for the new church, amidst the tourist attractions of the ballroom, funfair and gardens, he was so impressed by the prominent location on St. George's Mount that he purchased Sandrock and its grounds for £3,000, demolishing the house in 1931. The foundation stone was laid by Bishop Ambrose Moriarty on 30 July 1933, and the Church of Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Philomena opened on 2 August 1935. It cost £58,000, which was raised in full by Fr. Mullins and the parishioners so that it could be built free of debt. Fr. Mullins even donated the £2,000 which his parishioners had collected for his Golden Jubilee of priesthood in 1939. The funding and construction of the church, however, was not trouble-free, and Fr. Mullins' assertive manner



Bishop Ambrose Moriarty



Above: Sandrock just prior to demolition, 1931
Below: Design for the new church as built

brought him into conflict with the diocesan authorities in his long struggle to realise his ambitious vision.



Aerial photo of New Brighton in 1936
showing the church with its dome middle
left © Yesterday's Wirral Books



Father Thomas Mullins

1864-1945

Fr. Mullins was an Irishman who came to New Brighton as rector in 1909 after a short incumbency at Knutsford. He had studied for the priesthood at the English College in Lisbon, where he was ordained in 1889 at the age of 25. Four years later he returned to Lisbon to serve as a professor at the College. While in Lisbon, he had been impressed by the late 18th century Basilica da Estrela, which was built as a votive offering by Queen Maria I of Portugal in thanksgiving for the birth of her son. This huge, hilltop church, with its giant dome, can be seen from across the city, and became the inspiration for his basilica in New Brighton.

Before his arrival in New Brighton, Fr. Mullins had already become acquainted with the Wirral, having served as curate from 1889-90 under Fr. Hugh Singleton, rector of Seacombe, returning for a further year in 1900-1901. The rector must have been impressed by his curate, for soon after Fr. Singleton became bishop in 1908, he invited Fr. Mullins to become rector for New Brighton. The trust between bishop and priest, however, was to be sorely stretched over the gestation and building of the new church.

A pen portrait of the formidable priest, written after Fr. Mullins' death by Jim Higgins, a parishioner, showed the esteem in which he was held. Higgins remembered him as *'a commanding figure, both physically and mentally'*,

who *'did not suffer from [an] inferiority complex'*. Out of his hearing, some people affectionately, but irreverently, referred to him as 'Pope Mullins', for he did not believe in committees, considering that they wasted too much time. He begged and cajoled his flock to give generously towards the New Church Fund, seating himself at the church door before Mass to ensure that everyone placed a coin on the plate as they entered, and holding a further collection as they departed. Even on Ash Wednesday, when the faithful went up to the altar rail to receive the ashes, they found that the priest was closely followed by an altar boy with a collecting plate. But as the economic depression took hold, and fundraising became ever more challenging, Fr. Mullins was obliged to try out other methods.

At this time rectors enjoyed significant financial autonomy, and Fr. Mullins took advantage of the lack of accountability to speculate with some of the monies that he had worked hard to amass. Although regulations required that church funds were to be held in trust, and should only be invested in gilts or securities, Fr. Mullins placed money in much riskier speculations such as international currencies and German loan stock. He dabbled in equities, including Daily Mail shares, to which Bishop Singleton took great exception. When later confronted about these daring investments, he pointed out that the transactions had made money, and claimed that his financial management had Bishop Singleton's support. This



Fr. Mullins with the school football team, 1911-12 season

was certainly untrue, since letters from the bishop show increasing concern about the investments and, indeed, there is evidence that losses as well as gains were incurred. Yet Fr. Mullins was a man with a vision, and the achievement of his ambition was to be the ultimate reward.

Parish Priests



**Canon Randolph Frith,
1881-1887**

Born in 1808 in Sheffield, his main ministry was as rector of Ss. Philip and James, Stockport, 1844-79. During his ministry as a chaplain to a fever hospital he had become very ill and was the only priest to survive a cholera epidemic when at St. Patrick's in Liverpool. After a short period of retirement he came to New Brighton where he built the first church in 1881, which was a major undertaking for a man of 73. He lived in New Brighton until his death in 1893.



**Canon William Stanton,
1887-1906**

Born in 1836 in Liverpool, he became rector of St. Alban's, Liscard in 1878. When Canon Frith retired from Ss. Peter and Paul in 1887, Canon Stanton succeeded him, serving until 1906. Then, having set up the new mission of English Martyrs in Wallasey Village in 1902, he moved to be rector there, dying in 1909.



**Father William Francis Stanley,
1906-1908**

Born in 1862 in Congleton, he had a number of brief posts before coming to New Brighton in 1906. Sadly, he died in the presbytery aged 46, only two years later.



**Canon Henry Mottram,
1908-1909**

Born in 1866 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, he was curate at New Brighton, 1898-1900. After the sudden death of Fr. Stanley, he was appointed as rector in 1908. However, in 1909 he moved to Seacombe where he remained until his death in 1928.



**Father Thomas Mullins,
1909-1945**

After the unsettling, short incumbencies, a longer tenure was needed, and this was provided by Fr. Mullins, who stayed for 36 years until his death in 1945. He was responsible for the building of the present church.



**Monsignor Maurice Curran, VG
1945-1960**

Born in 1879 in County Tipperary, he moved to Shrewsbury Diocese in 1912 and was at New Brighton, 1945-60. As Vicar General, he was held in high esteem, and was described by one of his successors as 'beloved and wise'. He died in 1960.



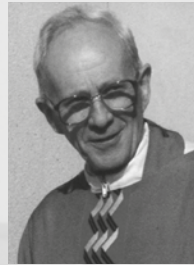
**Father Anthony Myers,
1990-1996**

Born in Workington in 1942, he carried out restoration work including installing new lighting, improving the heating system, and introducing two stained glass windows of Ss. Peter and Paul. He is now retired.



**Father John Austin Quinn,
1960-1983**

Born in Birkenhead in 1905, he was a curate under Fr. Mullins at the time of the opening of the church during 1930-34. He returned to be parish priest at New Brighton until his death in 1983. He was succeeded by Fr. Joseph Patrick Prendiville, whose health broke down after only a few weeks, leading to his immediate retirement.



**Father Michael Wentworth,
1996-2006**

Born in Prescott in 1932, he is particularly remembered for his caring ministry. He retired through ill health in 2006 and died on his 76th birthday in 2008, a much loved priest.



**Canon Robert Fallon,
1983-1990**

Born in Birkenhead in 1916, he became critically ill after his work in Crewe, 1968-81, but recovered and was appointed to New Brighton in 1983. The Church celebrated its Golden Jubilee during his time, in 1985. He retired in 1990 but died the following year.

**Father John Feeney,
2006-2008**

Fr. Feeney, appointed in September 2006, was also parish priest of Our Lady of Lourdes and English Martyrs. In 2008 while he was parish priest, the church was closed.

The Building of the Church

Opposite: West elevation of the church as approved (without a dome), June 1931

Fr. Mullins had high ambitions for the new church at New Brighton. His period of study at the English College in Lisbon had opened his eyes, and it is not difficult to detect the influence of his experiences abroad in the design of the church. The Estrela, or Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Lisbon, which became his model, is a large domed building with a uniquely Portuguese combination of Baroque and Neoclassical elements. Its façade is surmounted by a pediment and is flanked by twin bell towers. The basilica has an interior richly ornamented with pink, yellow and grey marble, which Fr. Mullins sought to emulate.

Fr. Mullins was very decisive about realising his daring vision. He first approached Edmund Bertram Kirby, son of the architect of the old church in Hope Street, to prepare plans, albeit without the bishop's permission. When Bishop Singleton questioned Kirby about the matter in July 1927, he was surprised to hear that Fr. Mullins had given him directions to design 'a very large and grand church', with 'very definite instructions as to size, character etc.' Sometime after this, Fr. Mullins decided against Kirby, appalled by his estimate of £180,000 for a church on this scale, and called in another architect, Ernest Bower Norris, for alternative advice. At a presentation made by Fr. Mullins to the diocese in February 1929 where both Kirby's and Norris's plans were tabled, Norris's appointment was supported. Yet, as recorded in the

minutes, the diocesan authorities made a number of observations about the design of the church. They forbade the erection of a dome, and suggested that a church seating 600 would be quite sufficient. They also recommended that it might be designed to be built in stages. These remarks would not have been received well by Fr. Mullins, who had very fixed ideas about the style, the dome and the size of the church, and he chose to ignore them. Indeed, the minutes were never communicated to Norris, who was merely told to prepare a sketch leaving out the dome, but making provision for its addition at a later date. In 1930 the diocese gave permission for the church, minus its dome and circular drum, and on 12 June 1931 the contract documents were signed by Fr. Mullins. Five days later the plans were approved by the Wallasey Corporation Works

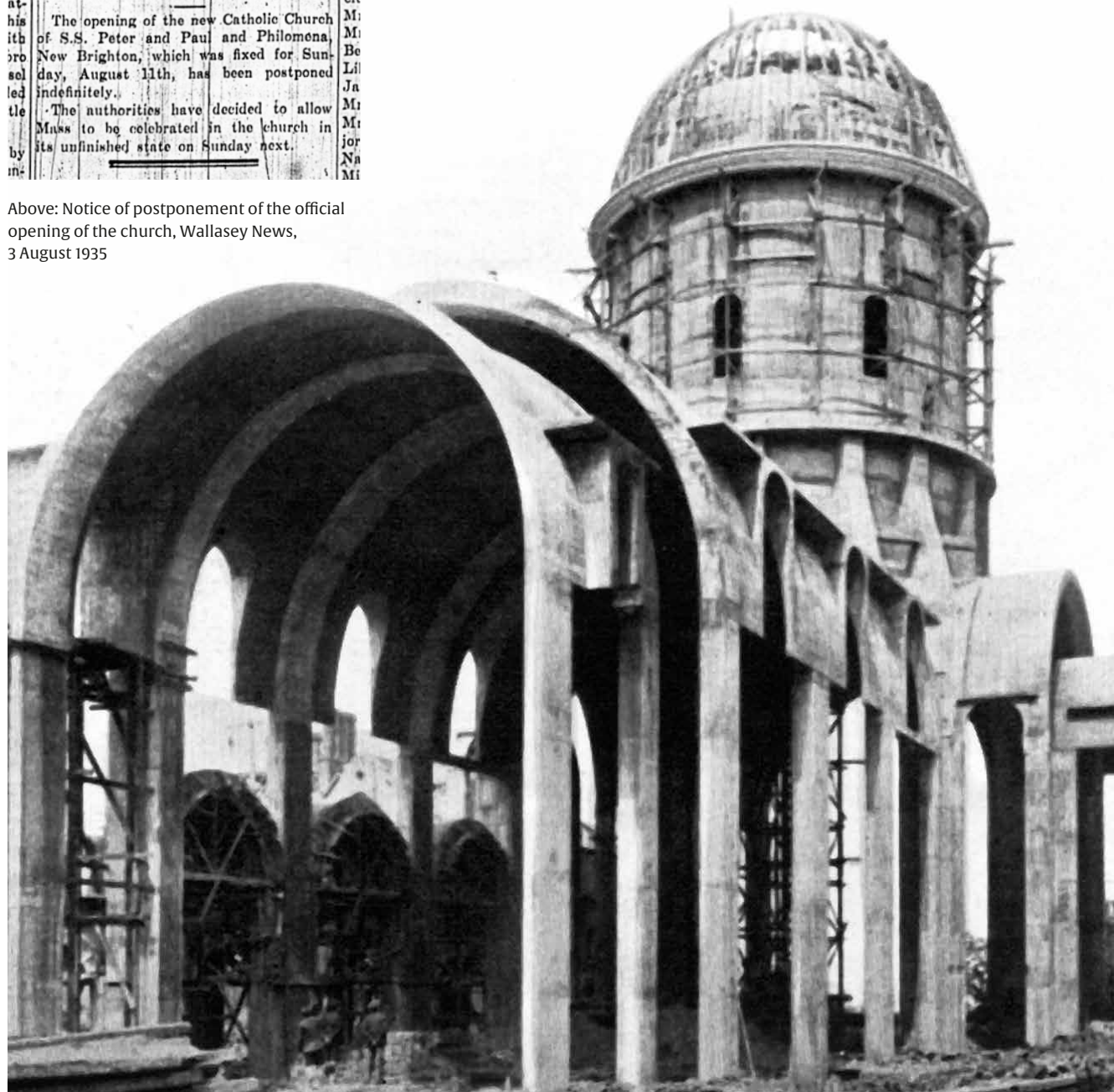
Committee. The following week the Liverpool Post included an article entitled '£30,000 Church for New Brighton: on a site visible from Liverpool'. It was reported that the design of the building had not been finally determined, but that a feature of the church in the future would probably be a large gilded dome, illuminated at night, and drew a comparison with Edwin Lutyens' design for the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral at Brownlow Hill, which was also intended to have a huge dome. Just 10 months later, without the bishop's knowledge, Fr. Mullins signed a further contract authorising the construction of the dome, informing Norris that he had secured all the funds needed to build it.

Below: Reinforced concrete vaults and columns under construction, 1932





Above: Notice of postponement of the official opening of the church, Wallasey News, 3 August 1935



The church takes shape, with its reinforced concrete dome under construction, 1932



Setting of the foundation stone by Bishop Moriarty, 30 July 1932



Initially all went smoothly, and with the reinforced concrete structure well advanced, the foundation stone was set with great ceremony by the coadjutor, Bishop Ambrose Moriarty, on 30 July 1932. (A coadjutor is an assistant bishop with right of succession; Bishop Moriarty went on to succeed Bishop Singleton as Bishop of Shrewsbury in 1934). Later that year, Bishop Singleton made a trip to New Brighton to see the new church under construction, and was taken aback to find an imposing concrete dome. He was accompanied on the visit by Bishop Moriarty who later asked Fr. Mullins to explain his disobedience. Fr. Mullins claimed that he was obliged to do so as otherwise he would have had 'a miserable church'.

By this time there were also contractual problems. Fr. Mullins was at odds with Norris, and would only communicate with him via his solicitor. The contractor had gone bankrupt, and there were representations from subcontractors who had not been paid for their work. Around Christmas 1933, as reported in the local press, all work stopped. At this point the bishop decided to intervene and ordered that work should proceed with a view to opening the church around September 1934.

By early 1934 work on the dome had been completed, but continued delays

put the opening date back by almost 12 months. The official opening was eventually set for Saturday, 11 August 1935, but an announcement in the Wallasey News of 3 August stated that *"The opening of the new church by the Bishop of Shrewsbury has been postponed indefinitely"*. The notice added that *"The authorities have decided to allow Mass to be celebrated in the church in its unfinished state on Sunday next."* Elsewhere in the same edition it was recorded that the new church was indeed *"blessed by the Rev. Father T. Mullins, with more than 300 people present, including a number of priests from various parts of the Diocese"*. In contrast with the intended consecration by the bishop, it was a simple affair, led by Fr. Mullins dressed in his cope, blessing the church with holy water.

The official opening was postponed probably because Fr. Mullins had been unable to provide evidence that the full cost of the church had been met, as required by Canon Law. Consecration can only take place once all debts for church building have been settled. The impasse was no doubt compounded by the bishop's discovery, shortly before the opening, that the high altar had been ordered at a cost of £5000 without his permission. The Bishop had specifically instructed that he should

be consulted about the altars in a letter of 10 June 1931, and again he had been disobeyed. The matter was made worse by the fact that one of the marble columns of the altar had been broken in transit between Italy and Britain, and it was a long time before it could be replaced.

The final stage was the building of the presbytery. Norris's early drawings showed it two storeys high with an attic floor and full height bay windows (see illustration on page 5). Again Bishop Singleton had not seen any plans, but he was anxious that he should not be side-stepped again. After conferring with Bishop Moriarty in early 1934, he wrote to Fr. Mullins setting the absolute limit of expenditure at £2000. This was on the basis that *"if they said £2500, Fr. Mullins would go for £3000, and with £2000 they would be able to keep it to £2250 or £2500"*. It is not known what the final cost was for the presbytery, but this time Fr. Mullins was forced to scale back his ambition.

The Design of the Church

Ernest Bower Norris, who practised under the name of Sandy and Norris, had offices in Stafford and Manchester. Together with his later partner F.M. Reynolds, he built many Roman Catholic churches during a long career, mostly in the Nottingham and Salford Dioceses.

His favoured style was Romanesque, using sheer walls of brickwork, monumental towers and shallow domes, as seen in the church of St. Willibrord, Clayton, Manchester or St. John the Baptist, Rochdale, where the priest wanted a Byzantine church with a dome and mosaics in the manner of Hagia Sofia. These historical sources were often mixed with touches of Art Deco.

The Estrela in Lisbon was a rather different model, and posed a particular challenge to emulate on a restricted budget. Nonetheless, Fr. Mullins and his architect seem to have taken inspiration from this beloved building by adapting its size and many of its stylistic elements to the tastes of an English congregation and the needs of a Northern climate. The cruciform basilica form of the Estrela, with a nave three bays deep and a domed crossing was adopted at the Church of Ss. Peter and Paul and

St. Philomena. All the most salient details of the Lisbon basilica – pedimented façade, twin bell towers, enormous dome, coloured marble – find echoes in New Brighton. Even the geographical situation of the twentieth century church follows the example of its Portuguese predecessor, for the Estrela dominates western Lisbon from its hilltop perch, much as Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Philomena dominates its surroundings from the highest point in the Wirral. The main differences are the brick exterior and the presence of side aisles at New Brighton, as well as the greater restraint in the interior and exterior ornamentation. In contrast with the Estrela, it relies principally on proportion and simple mass for its effect.

In bringing the Baroque to New Brighton, Norris relied on the use of reinforced concrete. The vaults of the roof, the tall circular drum, the dome and the finial with its cross are all formed in ferro-concrete, and the whole structure is supported on concrete columns. The concrete work was erected independently and in advance of the brickwork, which is not load-bearing. The reinforced concrete columns and arched ribs of the vault likewise need no lateral support from the brick walls, and the whole structure is founded on rock. The structural engineering was progressive for its time, and while under construction, the building featured in a booklet issued by the British Portland Cement Association entitled *Concrete Churches*.

Left: St. John the Baptist, Rochdale, built in 1925.

The interior is grand and spacious, the nave measuring 40 feet long and 50 feet high to the barrel vault, whilst the dome rises to 86 feet above the sanctuary. At the west end is a narthex with choir gallery, and narrow processional aisles run to each side of the nave arcade with provision for six side chapels. Decoration is concentrated solely on the high altar, reredos and two main chapels, which are all clad in sumptuous coloured marbles including Carrara, Cipollino, lapis lazuli, alabaster, Pavonazzo, Connemara, Italian Bracce, Swedish Green, Ambrosial Skyros and others, reminiscent of Rome's Baroque basilicas, and are amongst the finest altars found in any Catholic church in Britain. When the building opened, there was seating for 1000 worshippers, making it the largest church in the Shrewsbury Diocese.

Yet far from being just a piece of eye-catching architecture, the constituent parts and details of this church are rich in meaning and in different ways they symbolize Christian belief: Jesus Christ, the Christian soul, and the Church community itself. Much like the Tabernacle constructed by Moses as a dwelling place for the Divinity according to the plans revealed to him by God (Exodus 40), Catholic churches generally have three main parts, following a graduated hierarchy: the *narthex*, the *nave* and the *sanctuary*. These features are explored in the guided tour of the interior which follows.





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Basilica da Estrela, Lisbon

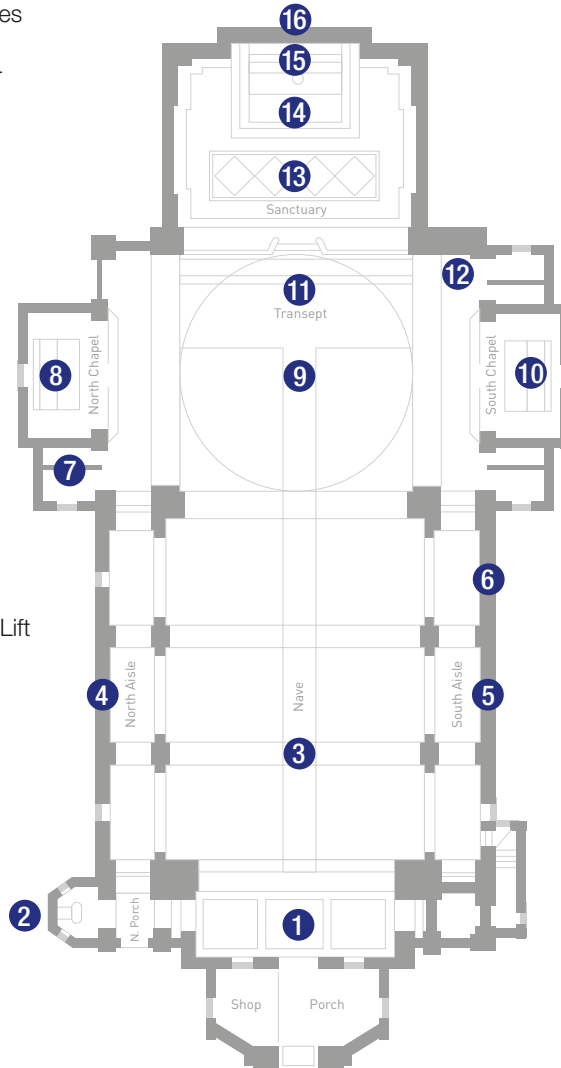
Ernest Bower Norris joined Henry Sandy, firstly based in the Manchester office where he worked on St John's Church, Rochdale, and then from the early 1920s he was based in Stafford. His designs for the Church of Ss. Peter and Paul at New Brighton is probably his finest achievement.



The Shrine in Detail

The tour of the church draws attention to the main features of interest, explaining their liturgical functions and their spiritual significance.

1. Narthex
2. Baptistry
3. Nave
4. St. Anthony's Statue
5. St. Peter's Statue
6. St. Philomena's Altar
7. Confessional
8. Sacred Heart Altar
9. Dome
10. Lady Altar
11. Transept
12. Statue of St. Joseph the Worker
13. Sanctuary
14. High Altar
15. Great Monstrance and Lift
16. Infant of Prague Statue



Narthex 1

The narthex is a transitional space between the church entrance and the nave, separated by a glass screen which was installed in 2015 (the porch leading into the narthex was not part of the original plan). Although unassuming architecturally, it plays an important part in the church's liturgical life, especially during the initiation rites of the Sacrament of Baptism. Theoretically, in keeping with the practice of primitive Christianity, the catechumen (candidate for Baptism), not yet baptised, should not come into the nave, which is reserved for the faithful. Nowadays, the distinction between narthex and nave is purely symbolic. Above the narthex is the choir gallery, accessible through a staircase in the first bay of the south aisle. The original organ, which was brought from the Hope Street church of 1881, is still in place, though it awaits restoration or replacement.



Baptistery 2

At the north end of the narthex is a small baptistery chapel. Liturgically, this is one of the most important places in a church, where the first sacrament of Christian initiation is administered. The art deco reredos shows the baptism of Christ. The massive marble font – still in regular use – is octagonal in shape, in keeping with ancient Christian baptismal iconography. The number eight is mystically associated with the Sacrament of Baptism in Scripture; *“In the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you.”* (1 Pet 3:20-21).



The two small stained-glass windows show three interlocking fish; three in honour of the Trinity. Since ancient times the fish has been a symbol of Christ as the Greek word for fish, *ichthus*, is an acronym spelling out the first letters of the expression, also in Greek; *Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour*. Speaking of baptism, the early Christian writer Tertullian (died c. AD 220) wrote, *“We, little fishes, after the example of our ichthus Jesus Christ, are born in water.”* Commenting on Christ’s commission to the Apostles (in Matt 4:18), *“I will make you to be fishers of men”*, St John Chrysostom (died AD 407) added; *“This is indeed a new manner of fishing; since those who go fishing bring fish out of the water and cause death to their catch. We, however, throw human beings into the waters [i.e., of baptism] and when they are brought out they are vivified.”*



Nave 3

The nave, generally the largest part of the church, is reserved for the faithful, who assemble there when they participate in sacred ceremonies or come as individuals seeking a place for personal prayer. Symbolically, the nave – located between the narthex (representing the the fallen world) and the sanctuary (heaven) – represents the Church on earth, the state of redeemed humanity. The word ‘nave’ comes from the Latin *navis*, meaning ‘ship’. One reason for this is visual; the nave ceiling – whether a barrel vault as here, or a Gothic ribbed vault, or a trussed pitch – often resembles the inside of the hull of an overturned ship. Symbolically, however, there is another reason, a ship represents the Church, which travels through the floodwaters of this life to the safe haven of heaven. The ancient Fathers of the Church often interpreted Noah’s Ark as a prefiguration of the Church. Moreover, Catholics see the Church as the ‘barque of Peter’. Just as two thousand years ago Jesus Christ preached to the crowds sitting in St. Peter’s fishing boat, today he continues to speak to us in the Church, the ‘ship’, of which the Pope, successor of St. Peter, is the helmsman. Taking our place in the nave of the Church should remind us of our place in the universal communion to which we belong. In the rite for the ordination of a priest, the bishop addresses these words to the assembled people; *“The captain of a ship as well as the passengers are in the*



same condition as to safety or danger. Their cause is common, therefore they ought to be of the same mind.”

The nave is three bays in length, each with an arch leading to the narrow processional aisles. The span is 40 feet. It is said that Fr. Mullins wanted five arches, thus making the nave a good deal longer. Viewed from the outside, this might have improved the overall composition of the church, but the space within would have been even more cavernous. The bays are separated by simple engaged pilasters without elaborate classical capitals – in keeping with the Art Deco aesthetics of the era in which the otherwise classical church was constructed. The entablature is simply an unadorned string course which protrudes slightly over each of the pilasters, although the original plans for the church called for a fully moulded cornice and entablature of French stucco. A rounded lancet window is pierced into the vault in each bay. The central bay on each side contains a stained-glass window of

the church’s patrons Peter (south side) and Paul (north side), which came from another local church.

The interior has recently been repainted in accordance with the original colour scheme. The scheme is simple and restrained, acting as a foil for the glorious polychrome richness of the Italian marble High Altar, the Lady Altar and Sacred Heart Altar. This simplicity was typical of modern taste in the 1930s, in reaction to the multi-coloured painted decoration of the Victorians which had by then gone out of fashion.

In conjunction with the repainting, the church has a new lighting scheme. Inappropriate harsh modern lighting has been replaced with LEDs that subtly cast light where it is needed most, highlighting the sanctuary, the chapels and the baptistery. In addition, six historically appropriate, gilded chandeliers have been installed in the nave. Craftsman-made and simple in design, these are of a grand scale that suits the basilica form of the church.

Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross were installed in 1963. They were offered by Lord Justice Brabin in honour of his late mother Sarah Brabin (died 1950), who had been parish choirmistress. Her likeness inspired that of the Virgin Mary in the fourth station. The stations, fourteen in keeping with the traditional number, begin in the Transept to the left of the altar rails and run counter-clockwise around the church. The stations were sculpted by George Thomas, a sculptor based at the Bluecoat Chambers, Liverpool, and their style recalls the baptistery reredos, which is almost certainly his work as well.

A popular devotional feature in Catholic churches, the Stations of the Cross retrace the tragic steps of the Passion of Christ, from his condemnation at the hands of Pilate to his burial. This devotion began with the early Christians but was formalised in the aftermath of medieval pilgrimages to the Holy Land: those who returned to Europe set up in their villages or churchyards reminders of the *Via Dolorosa* that they had retraced in Jerusalem. The current number of fourteen stations was fixed in the eighteenth century.



St. Anthony Statue 4



This statue of carved and painted wood dates from the 18th century and was transferred from the original parish church in Hope Street. The statue is among the treasures brought from Portugal by Fr. Mullins who became parish priest in 1909 after teaching in the seminary in Lisbon.

The First Portuguese Republic lasted for sixteen years between 1910 and 1926 and it would have been during this period that many of the works of art in the Shrine were acquired by Fr. Mullins. The Republic brought the monarchy in Portugal to an end and enacted a series of anti-Catholic laws which provoked persecution and the destruction of churches and religious art.

St. Anthony is universally recognised as the 'Patron Saint of lost things', and he is one of the few saints depicted in art with the Infant Jesus. He was born in Lisbon in 1195 and he became a Franciscan friar, dying in Padua in 1231.

St. Peter Statue 5



St. Philomena Altar 6

A recent addition to the church, installed in August 2013, is the altar of St. Philomena in the south aisle. This fine neo-Gothic altar was rescued from a closed convent chapel in Scotland and donated by benefactors of the Shrine. Though different in style to the rest of the church, the altar is faced in green marble that exactly matches that of the altar rails of the Sacred Heart Chapel on the other side of the church.

The fine Victorian enamel on the tabernacle door at the centre of the altar shows the 'The Pelican in her Piety', a fitting symbol of the Eucharist, since according to the old legend, the pelican nursed her young by piercing her breast

and nourishing them with her own blood. Above the tabernacle is a statue of St. Philomena and a small gilded reliquary containing a relic of this early Christian martyr. The magnificent red silk hangings, part of a set of matching vestments acquired by Fr. Mullins, were reputedly offered as a gift to a church in Portugal by a Spanish shipping magnate. He attributed the preservation of his fleet, caught in a storm, to the intercession of St. Philomena and subsequently commissioned these vestments in her honour. The embroidered anchor in the design alludes to the nature of her martyrdom (see page 36).



Confessional 7

Flanking the transept altars are small rooms, called confessionals, for the administration of the Sacrament of Penance. The Sacrament was instituted by Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism (Jn 20:23). Each confessional is divided into two small compartments; one side for the confessor (the priest administering the sacrament), the other for the penitent (the person receiving the sacrament). In order to respect the privacy of the penitent, the priest and penitent speak to each other through a small grille in the partition. Although the Sacrament of Penance has existed since the beginning of Christianity, in the early Church penances were often public; secluded confessionals in their current form were popularised around the time of the Council of Trent (1545-1563).

Only one of the confessionals is now in use for the Sacrament.

Sacred Heart Altar 8

The north transept contains a chapel dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, featuring a modern statue of Christ in stone. It is a noble image of the Saviour showing his love for humanity. The warm red marble (the colour associated with the Sacred Heart) of the Corinthian columns and pilasters was shipped from Italy during the construction of the church. The statue is surmounted by an elegant segmental broken pediment. The platform in front of the altar is decorated with an intricate pattern of inlaid marble.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Christ, a living symbol of Divine Mercy, grew in popularity in the seventeenth century after a series of revelations to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a French nun. Devotion to the Sacred Heart was a remedy to Jansenism, a heresy that ravaged seventeenth-century France and taught an excessively pessimistic view of fallen human nature and Divine predestination. St. Claude de la Colombière, a young Jesuit priest who spent time in England (c.1676) as court preacher to Mary of Modena, wife of the future James II, did much to promote this devotion.



Dome 9

The interior of the drum contains sixteen fluted Corinthian pilasters, worked in plaster, surmounted by a sophisticated broken entablature. This ornamentation gives a hint of what the decoration in the nave would have looked like had the architect's original scheme for the entablature been carried out. The gallery around the drum is accessible from an outside door, and there are eight rounded windows with clear glass, copper comes and bronze frames. The interior face of the dome, originally intended to be clad in a rich mosaic, is in exposed concrete. The dome reaches a height of over 100 feet and has a diameter of 37 feet.



Lady Altar 10

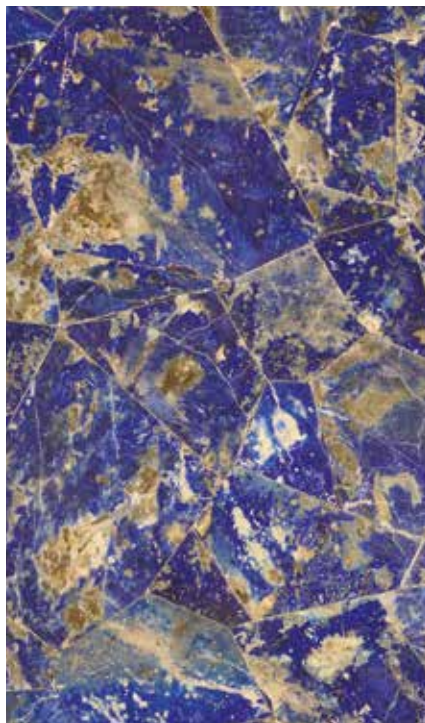
At the south branch of the transept is the Lady Altar. This chapel in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary is dedicated under the title 'Our Lady, Help of Christians'; principal patroness of the Diocese of Shrewsbury, to whom the diocesan cathedral is also dedicated. The rich reredos, inspired by the Italian Renaissance, is defined by two sets of paired Corinthian columns of Brescia marble and surmounted by an imposing scroll-work pediment. The entablature has a cushion frieze (rounded as opposed to flat, as if the frieze were caused to bulge outwards by the weight of the pediment) and a cornice with dentils. The interior of the pediment is filled with florid swags and an escutcheon bearing lilies, the symbol of Our Lady's purity, encircled by a gilded crown. The panel in the front of the altar, as well as the field behind the statue, is a mosaic of chipped lapis lazuli. This semi-precious blue stone, with its suggestive gold flecks, is an impressive tribute to Our Lady, who is traditionally represented by the colour blue. The seventeenth-century statue of polychromed and gilded wood was brought by Fr. Mullins from Portugal. The Christ Child, which can be removed for cleaning, has custom-made robes.

In 2020, a gilded Immaculate Heart was attached to the right arm of the statue. It contains a list of names of the congregation and benefactors who receive special protection through the prayers of the Institute.



Transept 11

The transept is the lateral space that intersects the nave to form the shape of the cross. The intersection of the nave and the transept is called the crossing; this space is often, as here, marked by a dome. To assure the transition from the square-shaped floor plan of the crossing to the circumference of the drum, there are rounded triangular transitions called pendentives at each corner; this was one of the most important innovations of Roman architecture. The total width of the transept is 86 feet.



Lapis lazuli panel on Lady altar

Statue of Saint Joseph the Worker 12

The stone statue of St. Joseph was added in 1962. The statue portrays the foster-father of Christ with the tools of his trade, carpentry. The door which originally led from this archway to the exterior was blocked in 1951.



Sanctuary 13

The sanctuary, from the Latin word for 'holy place', *sanctus*, is the most important part of the church, where the Mass – the central act of worship in the Catholic faith – is celebrated. The sanctuary pavement is defined by two intersecting pathways of light green and white marble in a herringbone pattern. The moveable choir stalls are a later addition and are used for singing the Divine Office in church. The marble balustrade at the entrance to the sanctuary serves to demarcate it from the nave and to provide a convenient place for members of the congregation to kneel when receiving Holy Communion.



High Altar 14

The High Altar, where the Mass is offered, is the centrepiece of the whole church. The reredos features two monolithic Corinthian columns flanking an arched aedicule with a marble shelf, called the 'throne', intended for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The columns were shipped from Italy with great difficulty due to the trade sanctions in place in the early 1930s. One arrived broken and the replacement took another twelve months to arrive, delaying the opening of the church. All the altars in the church are decorated with columns having capitals of the Corinthian order, the most elaborate of the three column-types in classical architecture, distinguished by ornamental acanthus leaves.



Great Monstrance and Lift 15

Behind the high altar is a manual lift, possibly unique in England, which was used to raise the colossal monstrance aloft onto a marble shelf at the level of the throne. The word 'monstrance' is derived from the Latin verb *monstrare* – 'to show', and is a sacred vessel used to show the Blessed Sacrament for the adoration of the faithful. Catholics believe that the Host, which in Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Philomena is normally reserved in the veiled tabernacle on the main altar, is transubstantiated during the Sacrifice of the Mass into the Body and Blood of Christ Himself. During the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament,

which occurs daily in this church, the Host is placed in the monstrance for quiet contemplation, and a special blessing is given called Benediction, accompanied by bells and incense, and the ancient tradition of Gregorian plainchant.

The New Brighton Great Monstrance is 1.2 m high and its Hallmark reveals it is made of 0.925 Sterling Silver, gilded, in 1926. Its bears the inscription 'IN MEMORIAM ELIZABETH GRIMES' on the underside of its base. It is decorated with jewels taken from rings and brooches donated by local people and visitors who used to come to New Brighton for their holidays. Its weight and size mean that it is impossible to carry into the niche without the aid of the lift. There is a small staircase behind the altar giving access to the platform in front of the throne. The black altar crucifix with ivory corpus, which occupies the throne outside of Eucharistic Adoration, was a gift to Fr. Mullins from the chapter of the cathedral of Lisbon.



Infant of Prague Statue 16

The Institute of Christ the King installed a beautiful statue in the niche above the high altar in 2015. This bespoke, hand-carved wooden statue is dressed in priestly vestments of The Infant of Prague. The Infant holds a globe in His left hand as a symbol of His Divinity and wears a royal crown as ruler of the world.

Although early devotions to the Child Jesus are reported in Asturias, Spain and throughout Europe during the Middle Ages, devotions were made famous in Prague in 1637, when during the Thirty Years War, Fr. Cyrillus discovered a statue behind an altar with its hands broken off. He claimed to hear a voice saying, 'Have pity on me, and I will have pity on you. Give me my hands, and I will give you peace. The more you honour me, the more I will bless you.' Devotions brought many claims of favours and miraculous healings and copies of the statue have been made in Poland and all over the world.

All churches of the Institute of Christ the King have a special devotion to the Infant of Prague in grateful thanks for answered prayers for one of their brothers.



Liturgical Vestments and Banners

The church has a fine collection of vestments, altar frontals and banners which have come from several sources. Since the earliest days of the Church, liturgical vestments have been worn by priests for the celebration of the Mass. They symbolise the function of the ministers and contribute to the beauty of the rite. Amongst the most interesting are the beautifully embroidered vestments dedicated to St. Philomena that were acquired by Fr. Mullins (shown on inside front/back covers and described on page 21).

The banners that hang in the narthex are also examples of fine needlework. They were used in processions to represent Catholic guilds and societies. The red banner with the Latin inscription *Adoremus in aeternum sanctissimum Sacramentum* (Let us adore for ever the most Holy Sacrament) was made for the Men's Blessed Sacrament Confraternity and has always belonged to this church. The Lady of England banner and the St. Agnes banner were both made for the basilica of Corpus Christi, Miles Platting, Manchester. The latter was used by the Girls' Guild of St. Agnes, known as the Agnesians, who would walk behind the banner wearing a white dress with a short red cloak and a wreath of flowers on their heads. The banner is made of silk couched in gold metallic thread.



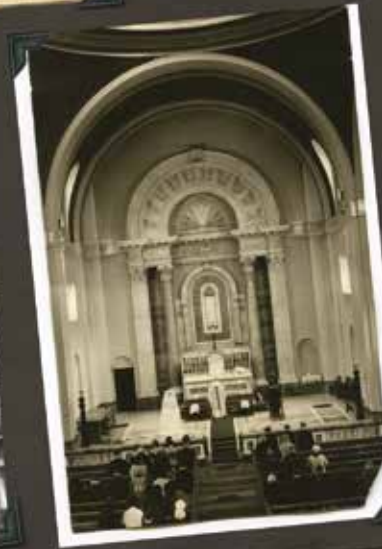
The First Fifty Years

The struggle to raise funds brought the large, thriving community together, while the sacraments of the Church provided grace and marked rites of passage for everyone.

One visitor remembers, "We were married at Ss. Peter and Paul's 30 years ago. Visiting the church brought back many happy memories..." The heritage of the church is not only about the building but of individual family histories, united to the liturgical life of the church. A former parishioner, now living in Wigan, was delighted to find the church doors open when she returned in 2013, "Many years ago, 61 to be exact, I was May Queen and crowned the statue of Our Lady in the grounds of what was then the new school."

1985 saw the church celebrate its Golden Jubilee and the school its Centenary, the latter having been opened on 27 July 1885 with 70 pupils. Mike Jarvis, Headteacher in 1985, recalls, "Memory fades but what survives is the recollection of the enthusiasm of parents, children and parishioners." A Golden Jubilee and Centenary souvenir booklet entitled 'Dome of Home' was published to mark the occasion, describing parish life. A special Mass was celebrated on 29 June, the Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul, with Bishops Gray and Tickle, other clergy and a congregation of 800.





'A near miss', the aftermath of Raid 39,
31 May 1941 on the Reservoir, Gorsehill Road.



Above: The old church after war damage on 10 August 1940

The World at War and the Dome of Home

At the 11am Mass on 3 September 1939, Fr. Mullins announced to his flock that the war with Germany had begun. It was barely four years since the completion of the building. Given the prominent position of the church and its inclusion on the navigation maps of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board from 1939, it was a prominent target for the enemy, and Fr. Mullins was justly fearful that it was vulnerable to attack. When the incendiary bombs began to hit Wallasey, he did not want to leave the church unattended in case of fire, and the fire wardens had to persuade him to seek shelter at the nearby Victoria Hotel.

On 10 August 1940 the first bombs began to fall on Wallasey, and St. George's Mount, situated close to the church, was hit. The Luftwaffe's marksmen targeted Merseyside especially because of the Port of Liverpool and shipbuilding in Birkenhead. Altogether, some 320 people were killed in the Borough and around 700 high explosive bombs dropped on Wallasey. The worst time was from 20-22 December 1940, when 121 people were killed; over a third of the war's total in just three days. It was then that Sandringham Drive and Albion Street were hit, and the old church of Ss. Peter and Paul was destroyed, but fortunately the new church was

unscathed apart from a few panes of shattered glass.

During the war the nickname 'Dome of Home' was coined. This was the name given to the church not by local people, but by merchant seamen, for whom the sight of the green copper dome was confirmation that they had made their hazardous journey across the Atlantic in safety once again. The name has stuck and is a fitting symbol for this beacon on the Wirral skyline.

Below: The Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill's visit 25 April 1941



Left: Royal Visit to Wallasey, King George V and Queen Elizabeth leaving Littledale Road, Wednesday, 6 November 1940

The Shrine:

A New Beginning

On 22 December 2003 the church was designated a Grade II listed building, focussing attention on its heritage importance. Yet high costs of repair and maintenance of the building led the Diocese of Shrewsbury in 2008 to make the difficult decision to close the church. In 2011 the parish was merged with English Martyrs Parish in Wallasey Village, to form a new parish called Holy Apostles and Martyrs.

Architectural enthusiasts committed to protecting this iconic building joined their voices to those of local Catholics concerned at the prospect of losing this unique landmark. Their prayers were answered in 2012 when the Bishop of Shrewsbury reopened the church, creatively giving it a new status as a Shrine.

The latest phase in the life of this historic church began on 24 March 2012 when the Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Mark Davies, officially reopened the church as the Shrine of Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Philomena. According to the Canon Law of the Catholic Church, a Shrine is a church entrusted by the local bishop with a special purpose, as opposed to a parish church, which exists to serve Catholics who live in a *particular territory*. A Shrine, unlike a parish, does not have geographical boundaries. Geographically, the Shrine of Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Philomena lies within the territory of Holy Apostles and Martyrs Parish, but the Shrine exists to serve all interested persons wherever they may live in the diocese and beyond.

Bishop Davies has set up the Shrine especially as a centre for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and devotion to St. Philomena. Public Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is held every day at the Shrine, and public devotions in honour of St. Philomena are conducted every Saturday. Moreover, the bishop has designated this church for the celebration of the sacred liturgy in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite (traditional Latin liturgy). The Mass, the Divine Office, and the sacraments are all celebrated in Latin in their traditional form, as they were when the church was built and for centuries before. Booklets containing translations and explanations of the ceremonies are available in the church porch, and regular faith formation talks on the liturgy are organised for those who wish to learn more about the history and symbolism of the sacred rites. Pope Benedict XVI had encouraged bishops to '*erect a personal parish [i.e., a church not limited to a given territory]... for celebrations following the ancient form of the Roman rite*'. In doing so, the Pope pointed out, '*what earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too*' (Letter to the World's Bishops, 7 July 2007).

The bishop has entrusted the Shrine to the pastoral care of the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest, a Society of Apostolic Life with headquarters (an international seminary) in the Archdiocese of Florence, Italy and priests working in numerous dioceses on three continents. The Institute was

founded under John Paul II in 1990. In 2008 the Church granted the Institute the status of a 'Society of pontifical right', directly dependent on the Holy See. Rome issued a decree confirming the Institute's charism as a spiritual family of secular priests leading a communal life of fraternal charity based on the traditional example of secular canons. The Institute is a missionary society devoted to promoting the reign of Christ the King in every aspect of human life.



In addition to the canons of the Institute and the seminarians in formation, the Institute also includes brothers (called 'oblates'), who offer their talents to God without going on to the priesthood, and a branch of contemplative sisters called the Adorers of the Royal Heart of Jesus. In keeping with its charism of fostering the union of faith and culture and promoting sacred art for the glory of God, the Institute has restored or built several churches in the United States, Europe and Africa. Since the reopening of Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Philomena in 2012, the Institute has opened six other Shrine Churches and missions in the UK: in Shrewsbury, Torquay, Newquay, Belfast and two in Preston.



Re-opening of the church of Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Philomena by Bishop Mark Davies on 24 March 2012 with Canon Olivier Meney, the first rector of the new shrine.



The Patrons

Every Catholic church is dedicated for the worship of God, and as a dwelling place for Jesus Christ, present in the Eucharist reserved in the tabernacle. But in addition to being consecrated primarily in honour of God himself, a church may also be dedicated in honour of a particular saint, called the titular or patron saint. This church has three patrons: St. Peter, St. Paul and St. Philomena.

St. Peter is venerated as the Prince of the Apostles, whom Jesus Christ named as the 'rock' of his Church (Matt 16:18). Impetuous but generous, this fisherman from Galilee denied Christ three times during His trial by the Jewish high priests out of fear, but after the Lord's Resurrection he made a triple profession of love for the Saviour who three times entrusted him with care of his flock; '*feed my sheep*' (John 21:16-19). St. Peter died as a martyr in Rome c. 67. The Bishop of Rome, successor of St. Peter as head of the Church on earth, is called the Pope. The current Pope is the 267th successor of St. Peter, going back in an unbroken chain of two thousand years. The principal liturgical feast in honour of St. Peter is celebrated, conjointly with St. Paul, on 29 June. The liturgical calendar also traditionally has several secondary feasts in his honour: St. Peter's Chair at Rome (18 January), St. Peter's Chair at Antioch (22 February) and St. Peter in Chains (1 August). The New Testament contains two epistles from St. Peter.

St. Paul, originally called Saul, was at first a zealous Pharisee who persecuted the nascent Christian community in Jerusalem. Miraculously converted by an encounter with the Risen Christ on the road to Damascus, St. Paul went on to become the 'Apostle to the Gentiles', working especially to bring the Gospel to non-Jews. He wrote or inspired 14 epistles in the New Testament. Like St. Peter, with whom he is closely associated, St. Paul was martyred in Rome c. 67. In addition to his feast on 29 June, shared with St. Peter, there is also a Commemoration of St. Paul on 30 June (since, in fact, the feast of 29 June is mainly devoted to St. Peter), as well as the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul on 25 January.

St. Philomena was an early Christian virgin and martyr. Having vowed her virginity to Christ as a young girl of 13, St. Philomena was cruelly scourged for refusing the blandishments of the Emperor Diocletian at the beginning of the fourth century. She recovered from this first form of torture, and subsequent attempts to murder her by drowning or piercing her with arrows both failed; she was thus finally beheaded by order of the jilted emperor who had desired to make the beautiful maiden his wife. In art St. Philomena is therefore commonly depicted with arrows and an anchor. Forgotten for centuries, devotion to St. Philomena spread greatly after the discovery of her tomb in the Roman catacombs in 1802, marked in Latin with the inscription of her name, *Filumena*,

'Daughter of Light'. The Feast of St. Philomena is celebrated on 11 August. Known as the 'wonder-worker', St. Philomena is frequently invoked as a very popular saint.

Due to his devotion to the saint, and much to the surprise of his parishioners, Fr. Mullins added the patronage of St Philomena when the church was opened. Veneration of her relic is recorded in parish notices as late as 1959. Bishop Davies reinstated her patronage when he established the church as a Shrine in March 2012.



The Institute Patrons

The Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest is a young, growing Society within the Roman Catholic Church. Under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and consecrated to her Immaculate Conception, the Institute fulfils its mission by working to restore the beauty, truth, and goodness of Catholic life and culture in the world today. The Institute strives to 'live the truth in charity' (Ephesians 4:15) by the heavenly help of its patron saints.

St. Benedict is known as 'Father of Christian Civilisation' who teaches us to put Christ first in all things, letting nothing take precedence over the 'work of God' (Rule of St. Benedict). His influence on the Institute is two-fold. Firstly, by giving priority to the Church's sacred liturgy, the Institute is dedicated to restoring the presence of sacred things as the cornerstone of society. Additionally, the Benedictine tradition of Christian hospitality provides a model for the Institute to receive others as Christ Himself.

St. Thomas Aquinas, 'Universal Doctor of the Church' teaches the Catholic Faith with a clarity and precision of unparalleled brilliance, while personally demonstrating the truth of Christ's teaching by the beauty and goodness of its virtuous practice in the daily activities of life. Enriched by Thomistic thought, the Institute endeavours to teach the Catholic Faith to all through sound doctrine and preaching.

St. Francis de Sales, 'Doctor of Divine Love' is perhaps best known for his celebrated adage, "You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar!" St. Francis de Sales teaches us that for one to desire the truth, it must attract him as something good. "Cook the truth in charity," he says, "until it tastes sweet." Formed in Salesian spirituality, the Institute hopes to manifest the beauty and profound joy of an authentically Catholic life founded on loving God above all things and loving our neighbour as ourselves for the love of God.

St. Therese of the Child Jesus, the 'Little Flower of Jesus' enchants us with a childlike confidence in the goodness of God as our loving Father while helping us understand how our fidelity to the little things done with love is the surest way of pleasing Jesus in this life and in eternity. St. Therese inspires the Institute with its missionary zeal for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, while remaining faithful to the duties of our state of life. By her virtuous example of humility, simplicity, purity, and generosity of self, St. Therese shows us how to imitate the Child Jesus, after whom she takes her name, and provides the Institute with a model of how to best serve Jesus Christ, our Divine Infant King, spreading His benevolent reign.

Canon Amaury Montjean, second rector of the newly established Shrine church from the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest, inspecting the roof in October 2012.



Image Courtesy of Barry Wade

Heritage Restoration and Repair

All that has been done at the Shrine since the Institute arrived in October 2011 has been done with generosity. The Institute priests rely on God's Providence and ordinary people have been inspired to give. They give quietly, and often anonymously. They give time, money and devotion. The true 'spirit of Christmas' has not been lost, and Providence provides.

After years of little maintenance due to rising costs, and the subsequent closure in 2008, the condition of the church had deteriorated. Water seeping in through the roofs and defective rainwater goods had caused substantial damage to the internal fabric.

During the winter of 2011-12 there was no heating at all. On cold winter days some people brought blankets and hot water bottles into the church. The boilers were subsequently overhauled at significant expense, but remarkably, that same week, a donation of similar magnitude was received which covered the cost.

A seminarian 'tweaked' the grand pipe organ in the choir loft for the opening ceremony on 24 March 2012, but it needs serious attention. Then, out of the blue, a brand new electric organ was donated, and a raffle, organised by a hard-working parishioner, covered the cost of speakers. However the main concern was to ensure the fabric of the building was watertight and secure.

This church has a long history of generosity going back to its creation and fitting out in the 1930s. The Great Monstrance, the biggest in the Diocese and encrusted with precious stones, was made from donations of rings and jewels from parishioners. Today's parishioners are following this example. Beautiful hand-embroidered vestments belonging to the original church on Hope Street were rediscovered and lovingly restored. Nothing was too much trouble, but there was such a long way to go. Active support from priests and seminarians continues to inspire volunteers working hard to bring this magnificent building back to its former glory.

Applying for funding

Headed by the Rector, Canon Amaury Montjean, a small group of volunteers were advised to phase the church's restoration. They decided to apply to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant under the HLF's new Grant for Places of Worship Scheme launched in early 2013. The complex process of submitting a detailed grant application took months of hard work, supported by a professional design team of conservation architect Adrian Swain of IBI Nightingales Ltd (2013-2018), Mark Pearce of KPS Architects (Sept 2018 - present), Quantity Surveyor Roger Hennell and many other expert consultants, all keen to see the project succeed.

In 2013, the congregation had little, if any, experience of fundraising, making grant applications or engaging public support for a large project. We learned that applying to trusts and foundations needed careful planning and a great deal of time to ensure that properly targeted applications met grants' criteria, knowing that all trusts are inundated with requests for worthy projects and cannot possibly help every case. Effective communication depends on high quality presentation and the ability to make a convincing case for support. Mark Proctor, a local graphic designer and the designer of this guide, has helped the parish understand this.

Amazingly, way back in 2013, the date chosen by Heritage Lottery Fund for announcing the good news that first phase grant funding had been awarded was 11 August 2013, the Feast of St Philomena!

And so began a long journey of four significant National Lottery funded projects supplemented by other funders, mini-projects, redecoration and a new lighting scheme.

Timeline

the first 50 years

- 1909** Fr. Thomas Mullins was appointed parish priest and realised that the original church building on Hope Street was too small for the growing number of holidaymakers to the resort.
- 1920** Fr. Mullins purchased the land on St. George's Mount for £3,000. During the next 12 years, he raised £58,000 to build the new church.
- 1932** The foundation stone of the new church was laid by Bishop Ambrose Moriarty, coadjutor Bishop of Shrewsbury.
- 1935** The 'Cathedral' sized parish church designed by architect E. Bower Norris was opened.
- 1939** During World War II, when merchant sailors spotted the Dome on the horizon on their way across the Atlantic under constant threat of attack from German U-boats, they knew they were safe and nicknamed the building the 'Dome of Home'.
- 1940** In December the church on Hope Street was destroyed by enemy action.
- 1985** Led by Canon Robert Fallon, parish priest, the Golden Jubilee was marked with a renovation of the exterior.

the next 37 years

- 2003** The Church was Grade II listed by English Heritage.
- 2008** The church was closed.
- 2012** In March, Bishop Mark Davies re-established the church as a Shrine dedicated to the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and invited the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest to take care of the building.

- 2013** Church placed on Historic England 'At Risk Register'. Restoration Project fundraising launched to secure this 'Beacon of Hope' and major landmark as part of the regeneration of New Brighton.

Project 1: Development July 2013 - Feb 2014
Delivery May - Oct 2014

Main barrel roof and west façade with accessible toilet.

Funded by: Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Grant for Places of Worship (GPOW), National Churches Trust, Latin Mass Society and Historic Cheshire Churches Preservation Trust.

Community Activities: Volunteer-led Heritage Tours for groups, Guide Book and Website.

- 2014** **Project 2:** Development Sept 2014 - March 2015
Delivery June 2015 - March 2016
Main façade, porch, choir loft, rose window, narthex glazed screen and gateway.

Funded by: Heritage Lottery Fund GPOW, National Churches Trust, Duchy of Lancaster Benevolent Fund, Latin Mass Society.

Community Activities: Film collecting oral histories and BBC 'Hairy Builder', Information Point/Shop, Group Guided Tours from University & U3A, Webcam on the roof.

- 2016** **Project 3:** Development Oct 2016 - Feb 2017
Delivery Sept 2017 - March 2018
Sacred Heart Chapel and Lady Chapel roofs, and kitchenette.

Funded by: Heritage Lottery Fund GPOW, Wallasey Bright Ideas Fund, National Churches Trust

Community Activities: Children's Audio Tour, Education Pack, School Visits, Heritage Visits by vintage bus, Very Big Book, Lectures and Student Visits.

2018 Project 4: Development July 2018 - November 2019
 Delivery March 2020 - June 2022
 Dome, drum and main sanctuary roofs.
Funded by: National Lottery Heritage Fund,
 AllChurches Trust.
Community Activities: Scaffolding Tours,
 Professional Development for conservation
 professionals, Memory Postcards and Exhibitions for
 older generation, Guide Book second edition,
 Heritage Talks with organ recitals and films,
 Online Reformation Study.

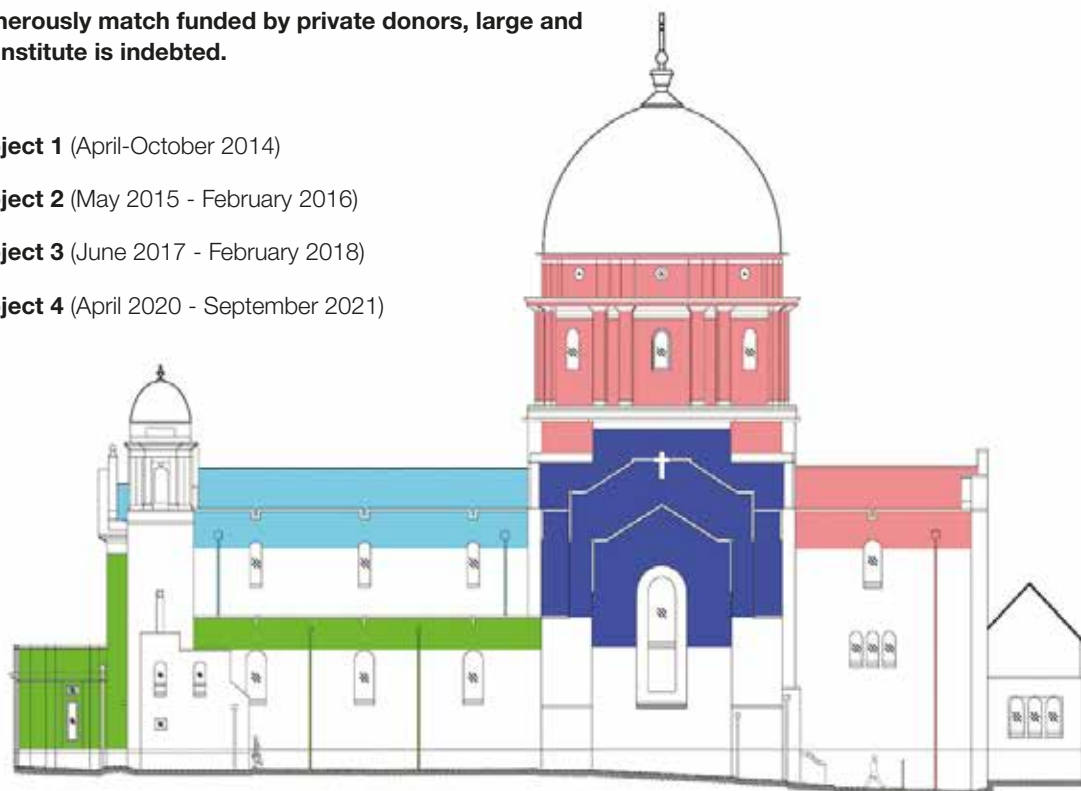
2021 New redecoration scheme took advantage of
 internal scaffold from Project 4.
Funded by: Significant private donation.

2022 South Clerestory and sacristy windows restored,
 part-funded by National Churches Trust.
 New lighting scheme, funded by community
 fundraising appeal.
 Church removed from Historic England 'At Risk
 Register'.

Restoration work by contractors on the Dome Building

All projects were generously match funded by private donors, large and
 small, to which The Institute is indebted.

- Project 1** (April-October 2014)
- Project 2** (May 2015 - February 2016)
- Project 3** (June 2017 - February 2018)
- Project 4** (April 2020 - September 2021)





Capital restoration works on the church building

Finally, after a steep learning curve over nine years, and four major National Lottery funded projects later, supported by other funders, together with redecoration and lighting schemes, the church has been transformed. From a standing start, this has been no small achievement. Help and support from volunteers has been critical to this success.

Concrete repairs

The main structural element of the church is the series of concrete arches topped with the cylindrical drum and concrete dome. Running through this structure is a lattice of steel reinforcement bars giving strength to

the concrete. Due to a combination of insufficient concrete cover to the rebars and chemical reactions from the concrete mix, numerous areas of concrete had 'blown' due to the expansion of the steel under corrosion.

Throughout every phase of the project, the concrete has been repaired under the supervision of our structural engineers. In the final phase, there was concern around the cornice of the dome where large lumps of concrete had spalled and fallen to the ground leaving cracks visible from below. The corroding steel was therefore exposed, given a special zinc-rich coating and in many cases replaced with new stainless steel. Then further anode protection was added.



Window repair

The windows of the main church are steel with lead lights, but with scaffold access we discovered much higher quality drum windows. All eight windows had bronze frames and seven had copper comes (H-shaped) dividing the clear glass panels. One window had been replaced from the outside, probably by a steeplejack on ropes. This was badly decayed and needed replacing.

New redecoration scheme

Surprises continued with access to the gallery inside the drum, when we uncovered an original paint sample, showing a pale duck-egg blue which would have matched the beautiful marbles of the sanctuary. This, and chemical analysis of the paint layers, led to a redecoration scheme, funded by a very generous private donor.





Lighting design

Inappropriate modern lighting has been replaced by more suitable LEDs designed by Mike Davies of KGA (UK) Ltd. Six historically appropriate chandeliers, suitably scaled, 1.5m high by 1m wide with two tiers of candle LEDs, were hung from the main barrel vault. A bespoke sample was attached to the scaffold in situ to plan the scale and position.

Activities to engage more people

Successful National Lottery projects must demonstrate wide public engagement. At first it was not clear to parishioners whether the wider public, beyond the immediate Catholic community, would find the church interesting. However, over the four major projects, a range of Heritage Tours for different audiences was devised, centred on the Guide Book, Very Big Book, films,

Audio Tour, Education Pack, Memory Project, Exhibitions, digital Heritage Talks and Reformation Study, involving the whole community in their production.

The ongoing challenge

Fr. Mullins and his parishioners showed the way and demonstrated real vision in building the church, reaching out to a large day-tripping community. The Shrine and its supporters took inspiration from them to secure the future of this landmark place of worship. Although recognising that a full repair programme would take years to complete, the parish with its dedicated ministry of canons, was undaunted by the scale of the task and rose to the challenge. It is now regarded as an exemplar of church restoration in England.

Beyond the restoration, our projects have continued to reach out in partnership with BBC Radio Merseyside, Wirral Globe, National Museums Liverpool, Williamson Art Gallery, local care homes, cafes, and supermarkets all helping us collect memories. Projects like these cannot be completed without volunteers and a dedicated Activity Team, so special thanks must go to Joyce Ashton and Jane Scott for unwavering support. With determination, commitment and Divine Providence on our side, it is amazing what has been achieved.

Anne Archer
Project Manager

Memories of New Brighton under the shelter of The Dome

The New Brighton Memory Project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, was launched in January 2022. Local libraries, museums, schools, cafes, shops and care homes took part by inviting visitors to write their memories on special Memory Postcards. These were placed in red Memory Post Boxes with digital submissions via the Memory Project Facebook Group. Some were broadcast on Radio Merseyside or displayed in touring Memory Exhibitions.

Every memory is precious and a window into New Brighton's past, recording happy times spent 'in the shelter of the Dome.' There have been some surprising benefits of the project; from promoting local identity to helping people struggling with isolation. Even those who have problems remembering where they have put their glasses can still recall fond memories from their past.

'When late at night I lie in bed, lovely memories fill my head, a fun filled day beside the sea, my Mum, my Dad, my brother and me.'

Brooke





'The Dome always loomed large over my fun-filled escapades along the promenade.'

Anne Morris, the Activity Coordinator at Bebington Care Home said, *'It has been wonderful to use your project to discover more about our residents... for example, we didn't know that Winnie ran the ice cream shop in New Brighton, she has been telling us funny stories about working there.'*

'It felt like we were somewhere exotic!'

Joan remembers *'Taking my Brownie Group to New Brighton in 1952 was a great adventure. Travelling by bus, train and boat and finally ending up sitting on the sand.'*

Many memories are humorous and touching. Pat Worrall from Ludlow wrote, *'The photo below was taken around 1949/50 in New Brighton, when we were about to board the Royal Daffodil steamer. I remember getting lost until my mother spotted my red blazer, and this photo was taken just after our reunion.'*



Memories of New Brighton continued...

One man remembers an early wartime photo of his family, sitting on the pier, surrounded by barbed wire; grandpa in a bowler hat, him as a little boy, on grandpa's knee. But New Brighton was also a place to watch the terrible air raids on Liverpool; Dorothy recalls how *'Flames licked the sky while searchlights swept the clouds pinpointing enemy aircraft, and anti-aircraft guns drilled upwards to bring them down. I had no fear though, I was wearing a colander on my head and holding my mother's hand. Hitler would never beat us!'*

***'We always said,
"Don't worry, it's sunny
in New Brighton!"'***

Mary remembers wearing her best clothes for a visit to the beach, and when her older sister got into difficulties in the Mersey her father rescued her *'complete with pipe and trilby!'*

Contributors agree that life in the past was different, but the memories are overwhelmingly happy: remembering the ferry, the beach, the rides, the baths, the crowds and even the experience as one of six young men lowered on ropes with a bucket of paint in one hand and a brush in the other to repaint New Brighton's lighthouse in 1963!

For the children there was the anticipation of arrival, *'running down the gangway towards the incoming ferry at the Pier Head, aged 5 it seemed so far away'*, and then *'the crowds all fighting for a spot on the beach, all forced to retreat with the incoming tide'*. At the end of the day there was *'a stroll along the front and a look in wonder at the Aladdin's Cave of gift shops, the Rock Shop, and of course the Fair! The smells of the oil, candyfloss, donuts, and chips were always evocative. If we were lucky, we had fish and chips for tea before heading home, weary and tired but full of fresh air and sunshine and lovely memories'*.

Amongst the shops that stood out was Eulah's Toffees where you could watch the rotating blades stretching the toffee, which then got chopped up and put into small white boxes for sale. There was also a big toy shop on the corner of Victoria Road, a kids' paradise.

'Flying kites, sword fighting with sticks, eating too many sweets till you were sick, rolling down hills, building big sandcastles, family memories everlasting. The cold sea water, lots of seagulls. Fish and chips, candy floss and lots of fizzy pop. It was all good fun.'

Teenagers enjoyed dancing at the clubs – The Empress Club, Davy Jones Locker, RJ Club, The Penny Farthing, Chelsea Reach, The Grand and others. New Year's Eve at the Tower Ballroom was the highlight.

'Then there was the Tower Ballroom, Saturday night, the big bands playing, everything finished at 11pm in those days and the last train to Birkenhead was 11pm, if you missed that we would have to walk home, and my mum was waiting for me with her slipper in her hand, those were the days...'

'There was motorbike racing along the sand at Harrison Drive...', and when the circus came to town *'the elephants would parade down the road, with monkeys swinging in their cages, clowns, dancers and loud music...'*, all making for a memorable occasion.



Several contributors sent wedding photos taken at St Peter and Paul's Church.

Picture right top: During WWII, Christine Perkins's parents were married by Father Mullins on 7 September 1944. James Moyes of Perth, Scotland was the Regimental Sergeant Major of the Black Watch. They met in Wallasey before the war when the Regimental Band visited New Brighton.

Picture right centre: Wedding of Anne & Vernon Rustrick, November 1945, married by Canon Curran.

Picture left bottom: Wedding of Terry Irving, 5 Sept 1964.

Picture right bottom: Wedding of Pauline & Michael Cooke, 5 June 1971, married by Fr. Quinn.



Memories of New Brighton continued...



As a 7-year old in 1956, Rosemary remembers *'The hill was very steep for a pair of short legs, but the wonderful church was full of light and sounds, singing and organ music. I used to wonder why my headmistress Sister Mary Carmel did not fall backwards over the low edge of the church's choir loft, since she conducted us with such energy!'*

A happy childhood in the 1940s at the allotments (before the school was built) after Sunday Mass were remembered. *'When you came out of church and turned right the first allotment was ours. A large stone wall ran along from our allotment to Sandringham Drive. This wall was stone and got a lot of heat during the summer. We grew every vegetable possible. Runner beans grew up this wall beautifully. We grew flowers and Wallasey Tomatoes. Each week we took my dolls pram full of sandwiches and home-made lemonade, up the hill to go to Sunday Mass. We then spent the rest of Sunday on the allotment.... Wonderful days!'*

Others have stories of courting in New Brighton. Barbara recalls her 19th birthday in 1956 when her boyfriend Bill suggested buying her a little present at the jewellers in Victoria Road run by an elderly lady. *"Well, what about a ring – do you have any engagement rings?" Bill asked. I nearly fainted, although we had been going steady for three years. The lady looked delighted and presented us with a tray of second-*

hand rings. We picked one out and my 'fiancé' then paid the sum of £12.10s. I don't know who was more thrilled, me or the helpful lady in the shop.'

A resident who has spent her whole life in New Brighton recalls how two friends took her to her first dancing lesson at the ballroom. *'That's where I met my husband, we danced all night!'*

The one lost feature of New Brighton that is most lamented is the open-air baths. Everyone has a tale of lounging in the sunshine, dipping into the cold water, sliding down the chute or diving. And then there were the famous beauty shows. Mike and Lynn got summer jobs there while at university and remember crowds of up to 15,000 people.

There were also donkey rides on the sand, and Lyndon, nephew of the donkey man, recalls how one day when he was walking the animals, *'one of them ate a £5 note, which was a lot of money in those days.'*

Some unusual stories stand out. One anonymous sender recalled walking the streets of his childhood with his baby daughter, after returning from the Falklands War. *"I made my way up to the church on the hill, that church of my childhood. When I was a child, my mother told me about my grandfather praying at the statue of the Virgin Mary, asking Her to bring his sons back safe from the war. My mum said he cried when they returned. And so, just days back from the Falklands,*

I knelt at the same statue with all my fears, memories, regrets, and courage. Touched by the love and joy I had experienced in the company of my baby daughter, I too shed tears, without - at that time - really understanding why, but knowing I was trying to connect with something that was bigger than all of it. That was forty years ago..."

'I went to New Brighton many times in my youth and never realised that just behind us, up the hill, was one of the most beautiful churches in the North West, Ss. Peter, Paul and St. Philomena - 'The Dome'. How did I miss this extraordinary church? Why didn't anyone tell me to take half an hour out of my day to visit this beautiful, sacred place!'

All collected memories are archived with Wallasey Central Library and digitally available on our website.





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