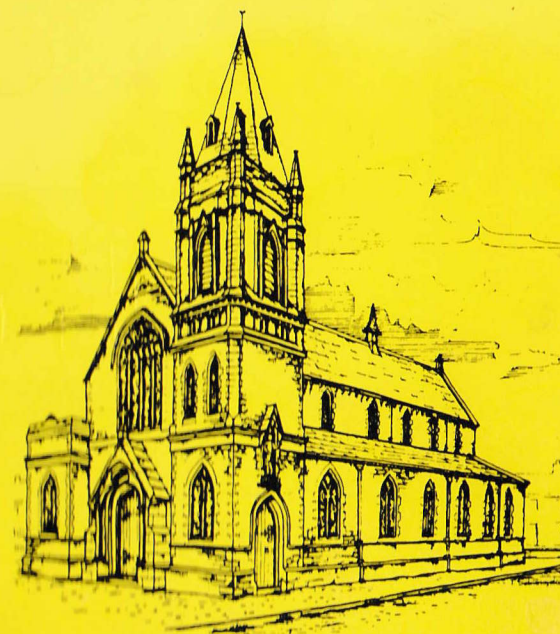


The Centenary of the Church of
St. Michael The Archangel,

Pillgwenlly, Newport, Gwent.

1887 - 1988

A Brief History



Acknowledgements

* * *

We express our sincere thanks to

The Very Reverend Fr. Augustine Little, I.C. for his kind permission to search for relevant information in the Archives at Derryswood and for his interest;

The Reverend Fr. Anthony Hamson, I.C. for photographs and help;

Mr. Bernard Dunn for his valuable information about the Father Hill School;

Mr. Bill Fouweather for supplying very useful information;

Mr. Bernard Turner for his help with the printing;

The many Parishioners of St. Michael's for old Newspaper Cuttings, information, encouragement and kindness.

We ask your indulgence for any errors and omissions in this brief contribution towards the Centenary Celebrations of our Church and Parish. It is offered in appreciation and thanksgiving for the labours of all - Priests and laity - who have made St. Michael's, Pill, what it is today. Their spirit is still with us and we look confidently to the future, secure under the protection of our Patron.

“Most glorious Prince, Michael the Archangel, be thou mindful of us; here and in all places, and always, pray for us to the Son of God”.

The Centenary of St. Michael's Church, Pillgwenlly



Original sketch by Mr. W. Garner, Architect for St. Michael's Church

A centenary is an important landmark in the history of a Parish, and it affords an appropriate opportunity for us to evaluate the debt that we, today, owe to those devoted priests who have laboured here, and to those Parishioners, poor in everything but faith, whose generosity made it possible for us to celebrate our present heritage.

For very many years the Catholic Church in South Wales was in a sad state. The Penal Laws imposed intolerable penalties on practising Catholics, with the result that many lapsed from the Faith, being deprived of their Priests, of their Churches, and unable to pay the heavy fines. Immediately following the repeal of those harsh laws, a small band of Priests set about rallying the remnant of the faithful, and in 1809, Father William Barnes visited Newport and said Mass in a house on the corner of Market Street and High Street, for a congregation consisting of Mrs. Pye (the owner of the house), Dr. James Hawkins, of Usk, Philip Williams - of Crindau House, and Jerry Driscoll and his wife.

From time to time, other Priests visited Newport, travelling by stage-coach, on horseback, or even tramping the roads, staying for a couple of nights with a Catholic family, baptising babies, hearing Confessions, offering the Mass, and then moving on elsewhere.

These Priests were: Fr. John Haley; Fr. Ignatius Richards; Fr. David Morton; Fr. Robert Gates; Fr. John Burke; and Fr. Richard Portal. Fr. Portal caught Typhus while he was staying at a house in what is now called Llanarth Street; he died there, and his body was taken to Bristol for burial, as there was no Catholic burial ground in Newport.

Thanks to the generosity of the Jones and Herbert families of Llanarth and Clytha, a plot of land was bought in 1812 and a small Chapel was built on the site where St. Mary's Church now stands, but there was no resident Priest until 1836 when Fr. Edward Metcalfe took up residence in a small cottage built adjoining the small Chapel. Most of his duties were among the Irish immigrants who were settling in ever-increasing numbers in the area of Pill. Famine and poverty in Southern Ireland drove them to seek food and work in South Wales. They lived in small cottages, and in shacks they built themselves, on the River bank, and conditions were deplorably primitive and insanitary. Fevers and tuberculosis were rife, and the lack of proper food and medical care, resulted in a very high death rate, particularly among children.

Fr. Davison was sent to assist Fr. Metcalfe who had become weakened by recurrent fevers, but he, too, fell victim to the dreaded Typhus while ministering to a dying sailor at the Docks; his body was buried in front of the Sanctuary of St. Mary's Church, in 1842.

In 1843, Dr. Baldicconi was sent to Newport, and he realised the tremendous challenge facing him. He appealed to Fr. Antonio Rosmini, the Founder of the Institute of Charity, to send Priests to the Newport Mission and in 1847 arrived, - Fr. Hutton and Fr. Signini. They set about their ministry with tremendous enthusiasm, but Fr. Hutton's health broke down after several bouts of fever. Brother Thomas was sent to help, and he certainly had a busy time, as Fr. Signini contracted Typhus and his life was despaired of. However, according to accounts written at the time, he recovered "thanks to the devoted nursing of Brother Thomas, and to having leeches applied to his temples, to being cupped, and to having hot mustard plasters applied frequently to his stomach." One might consider that he recovered in spite of his treatment!

Fr. Signini moved to Cardiff and was succeeded by Fr. Fordham, assisted by Brother Spenser. Then, later, arrived in Newport, Fr. Dominic Cavalli and Fr. Rinolfi who enlarged the little School, and who worked indefatigably among the ever-increasing population of Pill.

In 1862, two Priests were sent to work in Newport - Fr. John Bailey and his brother Fr. Michael Bailey. Fr. John was a quiet, studious man, an expert Architect; Fr. Michael was a man of action, energetic and full of enthusiasm, and he resolved to dedicate his life to the service of the Catholics of Pill who had no Church or School. He arranged the purchase of three cottages in High Street (- now St. Michael Street), one for use as a Chapel, and others for use as a School. These premises soon proved to be inadequate to the needs of the people, and so, after surmounting many obstacles, and undaunted by many set-backs, the Foundation Stone of our Church was laid on St. Michael's Day, 1886, and Fr. Bailey achieved one of his ideals. The men gave their labour freely encouraged by Fr. Bailey's enthusiasm, and within a year of the laying of the Foundation Stone, St. Michael's Church was

built and ready for the worship of God - a truly remarkable achievement.

“The Star of Gwent”, in its issue of 30th September 1887, printed a detailed account of the opening of St. Michael’s Church. We read “Shortly after 10.30 a.m., a monster procession of School children, numbering not far short of a thousand, formed at St. Marie’s Church, Stow Hill. A start was quickly made for the new Church, and the Procession presented a most imposing appearance, and was watched by thousands of spectators. The girls wore white, with long flowing muslin veils, immediately following the League of the Cross Band. The boys brought up the rear. Several Priests walked in the Procession, which was resplendent with flags, banners and bannerettes. The sacred edifice is an imposing structure, and was inconveniently crowded. The musical portion of the Service was beautifully rendered, the voices of the Choir, with a full instrumental accompaniment, having a telling effect. Fr. Bailey now saw the crowning work of years; now his hour of joy had arrived; the Bishop was present to bless it. The Bishop said that he was struck by the enthusiasm of the poor, for the liberality of their offerings had been altogether disproportionate to their means. They would reap a rich reward, for their Church would now be the mercy-seat of their God. The Irish had been driven from their country by poverty, pestilence and famine, and they brought to Wales nothing but their poverty and their religion, which grew, flourished and fructified, and the Wales of today, as far as Catholics are concerned, presented a striking contrast to the Wales of 40 years ago. The Bishop then forcefully defended the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence and said that it was as a consequence of such a belief that they built their Churches, as beautiful as possible, to house their Lord. Their Service lasted for 2½ hours; the music was “Farmer, in B Flat”, rendered with full Orchestra, Miss Willey presiding at the Organ. The Offertory amounted to over £100”.

We are, indeed, grateful to the unknown Reporter for his detailed and careful account of the event.

A Luncheon at the Westgate followed, under the supervision of the Proprietors, Mr. and Mrs. Dean. The Chairman was Mr. J.A. Herbert of Llanarth, supported by Colonel Herbert of Clytha. Also present were:- the Bishop of Newport, the Mayor and Mayoress (Mrs. & Mrs. G. Hoskins) the Very Reverend R.W. Raynold O.S.B. of Hereford, the Reverend Canons Wilson and Richards, the Reverend Fathers B.S. Wayde, Hallahan, J.B. Riley, D. Cavalli, F. Knight, J. Richardson and M. Bailey, together with a number of local dignitaries and their ladies. After the Luncheon, speeches were made, all congratulating those responsible for making September 29th, 1887 such a memorable occasion. The friendly relationship between the Catholic Clergy of Newport and the local Civic Authorities was acknowledged by Father Bailey, who said: “I express my deep-felt thanks for the unexpected sympathy shown me by the inhabitants at large in connection with the building of our new Church. To Protestants my thanks

are first due, for without them there would not be a Church because there was no available site - the very first requisite. Lord Tredegar and the Tredegar Wharf Company made it possible. The people of our Church, men and women, laboured in a fashion we will never forget, and gave their services free. Thus, we have been able to lay the concrete, spread the mortar and dig the foundations with the labour of our own people, without cost. More than this, they have generously contributed their money during all the year, with the result that St. Michael’s Church has been opened with a very small debt, compared with the actual cost of about £4,000”.

The evening of the great day was marked with a crowded congregation for the Service of Benediction, when an impressive sermon was preached by Fr. Richardson; and to crown the day, His Holiness granted a 40 days’ Indulgence to all members of St. Michael’s Church, together with his blessing.

So ended the great day, the centenary of which we are celebrating.

On October 5th, 1888, St. Michael’s Church was certified by law as a “Place of Public Religious Worship”. The Newport Registrar at that time was Mr. Thomas Parry, who returned to Fr. Bailey the Registration Fee of £3, “in recognition of the many kindnesses I have received from yourself and your Brother Clergy, to form the nucleus of a fund for the purchase of an Organ, as I understand that at present you are without one. October 10th, 1888”.

Fr. Bailey wrote a detailed description of St. Michael’s Church, (which we quote verbatim).

“The Roman Catholic Church at Pill, dedicated to St. Michael, is built in the Gothic style, and is remarkable in its design for simplicity and grandeur. It is uniform in structure consisting of nave, aisles, chancel, sacristy, 2 chapels, confessional and baptistry. The nave of the Church is light and lofty; it consists of 6 arches on each side, springing from circular pillars and surmounted by the Clerestory which is pierced with windows to give light to the body of the Church. The east and West ends are lighted by lofty windows finished with traceried heads in 5 divisions; the Aisle windows are divided by stone mullions and finished with cusped heads. The Tower, the base only of which is finished at present, and the Spire will ultimately rise to a height of 120 feet. The faces of the upper part of the Tower shown in the drawings, are to be enriched with buttresses, pinnacle and tracery, the base having a more substantial appearance. At each angle of the Tower will rise an octagonal turret, capped with a pinnacle. The Spire, which will be octagonal, will rise from the centre of the Tower and will be carried on 4 arches, turned at the angles. The roofs are constructed of timber with framed, braced, and arch-shaped principals, and are lined throughout with herring-bone boarding. The height of the nave to the wall-plate is 35 feet, and to the ridge of the roof is 61 feet.

The Church has an important advantage over many other edifices of its kind; it is not so closely surrounded by buildings, but is easy of access and affords a good view from almost every point. A more perfect building can scarcely be imagined.

The Western front has a spacious and lofty Porch beneath the Window, flanked on the south side by the base of the Tower, and on the north by the Baptistry which is finished with battlements surmounted by a large enriched Cross that can be seen from a very great distance.

The Eastern front is finished with buttresses, and has a lofty gable with an elevation of 60 feet. On the right of the Church is the Sacristy, of the same height as the North aisle which it adjoins. The buttress adjoining the Sacristy is capped with a Bell-cote of very elaborate design and workmanship.

Great difficulty was experienced in obtaining a good foundation, as the ground is artificial down to a depth of 14 feet. This was overcome by omitting the trenches for footings down to the clay formation and filling them with concrete, which by care of the Architect in its mixture of composition, so consolidated together that it has become one mass enclosing the whole of the site.

The Baptistry is approached through a lofty arch-opening. the roof is of timber, boarded and panelled.

The entrance lobbies are formed with pitch-pine framing, rising to a height of 18 feet; the upper part of the framing is left open and glazed with stained glass of a very rich design.

Between the windows of the aisles are ranged the Stations of the Cross. The frames are stained oak, and the Stations are painted in oils.

The Reredos and Altar are of good design, beautifully decorated in colour and gold; the Altar rails are of pitch-pine with ornamental cast iron standards

The Bishop's Throne is carved in oak and beautifully finished.

The Church is warmed throughout with a system of hot-water pipes. The water is heated by an apparatus in the vault beneath the Baptistry.

The walls and buttresses are built of Pennant stone, and the dressings to the door openings, windows, quoins of string course, columns, caps and bases are of Bath stone from "Picton and Sons", Monk's Park Quarries.

The Church affords accommodation for about 600 people, exclusive of the Gallery which is not yet completed.

The dimensions internally are: length 108 feet; width 49 feet.

Mr. William Gardner is the Architect, and Mr. W.M. Blackburn is the Builder".

For the next 17 years Fr. Bailey, supported by Fr. Knight and Fr. Butcher, and by his appreciative and faithful people consolidated the work he had begun, and endearing himself to all.

The dawn of 18th November 1904, heralded a sad time for the parishioners of St. Michael's. Fr. Bailey died at 11.25 a.m. at St. Mary's Presbytery, in the presence of Fr. Hickey, Fr. Nadale, Fr. Nunan, Dr. McGinn, Mrs. Ida Bailey, and Sister Theatine, his nurse during his last illness. He was 69 years old.

The news of his death spread throughout the town, and tributes poured in from Catholics and Protestants. The local Newspaper, "The Merlin", wrote: "He was a Priest who was a true Father of his people, and whose memorial is in the Church and School he had built, and in the improved conditions in which his people now live. It may truly be said of him, as of Sir Christopher Wren who built St. Paul's Cathedral: "If you wish to see his memorial, look around you".

His obsequies began with Prayers in St. Mary's Church, at 6.30 p.m. on 20th November, and a vast crowd filed past his coffin in prayerful reverence. On the 22nd November, a Solemn Dirge was sung in the presence of his Brother Priests of the Institute of Charity, and of a vast congregation, after which his body was conveyed to his beloved St. Michael's.

On the morning of 23rd November, Bishop Hedley pontificated and preached at the Solemn High Mass of Requiem; there was not enough room in the Church for all who wished to be present, and crowds stood in the surrounding streets, reverently praying. Among the Congregation were members of Newport Corporation, and representatives of the many Welfare and Social Associations with which Fr. Bailey had been involved. All spoke of his charity for all, of his unwearied response to the many demands made of him, and of the deep love he bore for his own beloved people of St. Michael's.

All traffic in the town was stopped until after the long Funeral Procession had passed; hundreds of men walked in front of the Cortège, and the pavements were thronged with reverent onlookers.

Fr. Emery, the Provincial Provost of the Institute of Charity, said the final Prayers at the graveside in St. Woolos Cemetery, and sorrowful crowds came to say their prayers for the repose of his soul.

Fr. Michael Bailey's ministry at St. Michael's is recorded on the fine brass memorial plate on the wall of the south aisle, below the 12th Station of the Cross:

“To Father Michael Bailey, Priest of the Institute of Charity, Founder of this Church, zealous pastor of souls, this memorial is erected by his grateful people, mindful of the unwearied service of many strenuous years, 1862 - 1904. He died November 18th, 1904, aged 69 years. May he rest in peace”.

New Catholic Church, at Hill.

*The Roman Catholic Church, at Hill
dedicated to St. Michael, is built in the Gothic
style, and is remarkable in its design for
simplicity and grandeur. It is a uniform
structure consisting of Nave, Aisle, Chancel, Sanctuary,
two Chapels, Confessio and Ropitatory. The Nave
of the Church is light and lofty, it consists of
6 arches on each side springing from circular piers
and surmounted by the Chancel, which is pierced
with windows to give light to the body of the
Church. The East and West ends are lighted
by lofty windows finished with tracery heads in
five divisions; the side windows are divided by
stone mullions and finished with cusped heads.*

Fr. Michael Bailey's Hand-writing



As it is today 1988

St. Michael's Windows

The first thing to which one's eyes are drawn on entering through the West door of the Church, is the large, colourful East Window, rising above the High Altar, and dominating the Church. It was installed in 1894, and like all the other stained glass windows which give light to the nave, was made by Mayer of Munich. Its stone tracery is in Gothic style, delicately and gracefully sculptured, which forms a fitting frame for the colourful pictures depicted in the glass. In the top light, surrounded by floral decorations, is the crucified Saviour, with an adoring Angel on each side. Below, are Angels holding lighted tapers and incense, and below them, are the 4 lights representing the 4 Archangels: St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael and St. Uriel. At the bottom of the window are Angels bearing the emblems of the Mass - in the first light, a chalice and paten; in the second, wine and water; in the third, a book of the Gospels; and in the fourth, a Sanctus bell.

The fine Window at the West end, now unfortunately partly hidden by the Organ Gallery, is richly coloured and very beautiful. It shows the Saints, in glory; at the top, St. Mark; below, in 4 lights separated by sculptured mullions, St. Peter, with the Keys; St. David with a white dove; St. Andrew, and St. Patrick. Below, are the emblems: a rose of Sharon; a leek; a thistle and a shamrock. This window glows with rich red, blue and gold glass.

The windows in the Chapels and in the walls of the Aisles are uniform in design, of Gothic tracery, each divided by a stone mullion into 2 sections.

The window in the Lady Chapel appropriately depicts the Archangel Gabriel announcing to Our Lady that she is to become the Mother of Our Lord.

On the right side of the High Altar, in the Chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is now reserved, there is a window depicting St. Cecilia, Patron Saint of Music, and an Angel, playing a stringed instrument; below are the words: "St. Cecilia, pray for us".

The first 3 windows in the wall of the South Aisle depict the 5 Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary. (The first Mystery, the Annunciation, being pictured in the Lady Chapel window).

In the first window we see Our Lady visiting St. Elizabeth, and the Nativity, and our prayers are asked for the soul of Mrs. Hannah Sutton, of River View, Cork.

Next we see the Purification, and the Boy Jesus in the Temple, and we pray for Captain Robert Sutton, of River View, Cork.

The next windows depict the 5 Sorrowful Mysteries - firstly, Gethsemane,

and the Scourging of Our Lord; here our prayers are requested for the good estate of James Donoghue and of Catherine Donoghue.

In the next window we gaze upon the Mocking of Our Lord by the soldiers, and His meeting with his Mother on the way to Calvary, and we pray for the good estate of Daniel Hannen and of Mary Florence Hannen.

On the left of the mullion in the next window is depicted the Crucifixion of Our Lord; and on the right, we see the first of the Glorious Mysteries, the Resurrection. Here we pray for the repose of the souls of Thomas Grace and Family; and of Catherine Grace.

The last window of the South Aisle shows the Ascension of Our Lord, and the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the donors request our prayers for the good estate of Edgar Crowe and Family.

Crossing to the other side of the Church, we come to the Baptistry which, appropriately, has a fine window depicting the Baptism of Our Lord, and the words: "This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"; and on the North wall of the Baptistry another window shows St. John the Baptist pointing to Our Lord saying: "Ecce Agnus Dei"; and below we read, "A voice of one crying in the desert, prepare ye the way of the Lord".

Along the South wall, we have a continuation of the Glorious Mysteries in the first window: the Assumption and the Coronation of Our Lady; here our prayers are requested for the repose of the souls of Denis O'Neill and of Ann O'Neill. (It will be noticed that these lights have been set in reverse order - the Coronation before the Assumption of Our Lady).

The next window depicts the Marriage Feast at Cana, and the death of St. Joseph, the first of these asking us to pray for the repose of the soul of "Thomas Woollet, for 40 years the Town Clerk of Newport"; and the second for Dr. Robert F. Woollet who died on St. Joseph's Day, 1887.

We next come to a window depicting the Flight into Egypt, at which we pray for the good estate of Mary Ann Ducable and family; and the Holy Family at Nazareth, where, our prayers are asked for Pierre and Rose Ducable.

The last window in this aisle represents the Last Supper, and Our Lord giving the Keys to St. Peter.

In the Pieta Chapel there is a representation of the Sacred Heart on the left of the mullion, and of Our Lady on the right; and above the Altar is a plain glass window.

In 1986, a window was set in the base of the Tower; it had been removed from St. Luke's Anglican Church in Bridge Street when that Church became

redundant. It depicts the Annunciation, and was blessed by Archbishop Aloysius Ward at an historic Ecumenical Service in St. Michael's, when the Anglican Bishop of Monmouth, the Most Reverend Derrick Child, celebrated an Anglican Eucharist at our Altar. This event is recorded at the base of the window.



*Rev. Brian Stares
Vicar of St. Stephen's*

*The Most Rev. Derrick Child
Archbishop of Wales*

*The Very Rev. F. Jenkins
Dean of Monmouth*

Plenty of daylight penetrates into the body of the Church through the windows in the Clerestory, which are of clear glass set in diamond-shaped panes. There are 6 windows on each side.

The uniformity of the design of the stone tracery and the pleasing rich colours of the glass of the windows, give a devotional, restful atmosphere to the Church. Our windows are well worth a prayerful study of the Mysteries of the Rosary and of the Biblical persons and scenes depicted in them; and we are truly indebted to the donors who so generously beautified St. Michael's with such lovely gifts.

As the Poet, George Herbert, wrote of his Church Windows:

*"Doctrine and life, colours and light, in one
When they combine and mingle, bring
A strong regard and awe"*

Fr. Donald Campbell's Recollections

We are deeply indebted to the late Fr. Donald Campbell for recording on Tape his remembrances of his boyhood in Pill, and his early schooldays in St. Michael's School, which he says was the happiest period of his life.

He was born on 21st November, 1908 at 3 Wingate Street, the son of a Scottish Presbyterian Father, Malcolm Campbell, and an Irish Catholic Mother, Mary Ellen O'Neil. He was baptised in St. Michael's Church by Fr. Thomas Nolan on 29th November, 1908. He tells us that Catholic children had a strict upbringing in the Faith, attended Mass regularly, and held their Priests in awe. There was a remarkably strong community spirit which was encouraged by their Priests who regularly visited their people and cared for their material, as well as their spiritual, welfare. With increasing prosperity at the Docks and little unemployment, women took a pride in keeping their houses spotlessly clean, and there was a jolly party in the "front room" on many an occasion, when Irish songs were sung, and when there was a copious out-pouring of alcohol.

At the age of 5 years, he entered St. Michael's Infant School which was a small compact building, with its entrance in Clarence Street, next to the Church. The Priest's office was in a room in this building, and he tells us that he was impressed with its cleanliness and with the highly polished floors. The School Hall had a Gallery and was often used for Concerts and other Parish entertainments to provide money for the Church funds. He found a very happy spirit there; the teachers were dedicated, and gave a good grounding in the 3 R's. Each Class consisted of about 50 children, and discipline was necessarily strict. The Head-teacher was Miss Roe, a very petite lady, but with a personality that commanded respect. Among other teachers were: Miss Payne, Miss Howard and Miss Raecroft.

Fr. Campbell entered the Senior School in 1915, and found life there somewhat rough. The boys, on the whole, were dare-devils and unruly, and up to all kinds of mischief. Discipline in School was made more difficult for the teachers in Classrooms that did duty for 2 Classes, separated only by a green curtain; and as it was possible to hear what was happening on the other side of the curtain, the teachers had a difficult time maintaining the interest and concentration of their pupils. He recalls that the grounding in basic subjects was thorough, and that the teachers were conscientious, but that there was a lack of a broad, inspiring education, probably because each Class had, at least, 50 children. There was a very great interest in all forms of athletic games, and St. Michael's School developed a deserved reputation in the town for Rugby, Baseball and athletic prowess, and the School teams won many an inter-Schools Championship.

In the School Playground there was a water tap with an iron cup attached by a chain, and this had to suffice to quench the thirst, as there was no

such luxury as School milk in those days. Playtimes were not happy for small, or delicate boys because the games played were often very rough, and sometimes dangerous; and bullying and fights were frequent.

The Head Teacher then was Miss Ward; and among the other teachers now remembered were: Miss Hurley, Miss Campbell, Miss Sullivan, Miss Foley, Mrs. Stribley, Miss Dixon, Miss Barry, Miss Lenane.

Children often arrived late for afternoon school because they had to take their father's dinner to the Docks, and there was a lot of truancy, as many boys - and girls - found it preferable, particularly on a sunny afternoon, to play at the dilapidated Old Dock, or to roam around the shops in the town. There was a lot of pilfering from those shops which displayed tempting arrays of fruit, and Fr. Campbell says that the sin to which he confessed in his First Confession was that he had stolen an orange!

In their free hours, boys often broke the law by swimming in the River, and there were occasional drownings. They invented their own games, and a favourite playground was on "the ballast", - soil deposited by ships returning empty from exporting coal and steel; they played in the street, inventing their own rules for football and succeeding in smashing many a window. The girls appeared to enjoy quieter games such as skipping and "hop-scotch", which entailed chalking a specified design on the pavement and gently kicking a small, flat stone from one section to another in a prescribed order.

Children could leave School when 12 years old, if it could be proved that poverty in the home made it essential for them to earn a couple of shillings; though 13 years was more usual, until an Act of Parliament enacted that 14 years was the minimum age at which children could leave school, when many were apprenticed to trades or served in shops.

Men employed at the Docks as Channel Pilots, Tug-boat men, Coal-trimmers, Stevedores and such like could earn very high wages, and they jealously guarded employment in these categories as a "closed shop". Most of them were careful with their money, but some spent their wages in the various Public Houses that flourished and proliferated in Pill. The Chief Constable of Newport at that time, reporting on the serious problem of drunkenness said: "There are 157 places in Newport where you can get a drink, including 80 Inns, 56 Beer Houses and 34 Clubs - and the majority of these places are in the Pill area where, last year, there had been more than 200 prosecutions for drunkenness".

Fr. Campbell relates that his father had been a very heavy drinker for many years, but he realised one day how much money he was putting into the pockets of the Publicans and he decided to spend his hard-earned money more profitably in the future; and as a result, he was able to buy a couple

of houses in Wingate Street, and send his daughters to College to train to become Teachers. He sent Fr. Campbell as a Boarder to Prior Park School, and later to train as a Teacher, but when he realised his son had a vocation to the Priesthood, he helped him to fulfil this desire.

One of Fr. Campbell's sisters - Mary - taught in St. Michael's School, and later became Headmistress. She died suddenly, sitting at her desk, in School.

Fr. Campbell, on reaching the age of retirement, returned for a while to live in a Flat in Pill, but then went to live in the care of Nuns at a Convent in London, where he died.



Fr. O'Neil

Father Hill

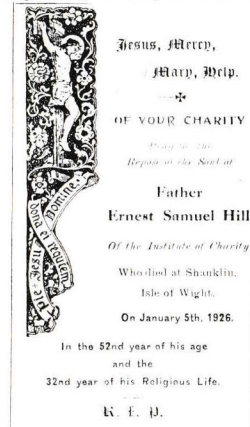


Fr. Ernest Samuel Hill was appointed Rector and first Parish Priest of St. Michael's in 1907, when St. Michael's became a separate Parish. He had been brought up in the Jewish faith, but when about 20 years of age he became a Catholic and entered the Institute of Charity. He made his Novitiate at Wadhurst, and after studying at Domodossala he was ordained Priest in 1904.

He ministered at St. Michael's for 17 years, first as an Assistant Priest, and then as Rector of the Parish. He was keenly aware of

the need of a better standard of education for his children, especially those who were suffering neglect and hardship as a result of the 1914-18 War, followed by massive unemployment. To raise money to build a new School was a truly daunting prospect, but he set to work, and by organising Concerts and various entertainments, but even more, by door-to-door weekly collections in which he himself participated, he succeeded in raising £14,000 towards the £15,000 needed to build the new School. The School was situated on level ground adjoining Mendalgief Road, and comprised a 2-storey block divided into 6 Classrooms on each floor, with separate blocks for practical lessons, for cloakrooms and Head-teacher's office. But Fr. Hill never saw the completion of his ideal, as he died on January 5th, 1926, at the age of

51 years. His death was undoubtedly the result of overwork, raising money for the new School, and all the business involved in buying a house in the Parish for a Presbytery. The Priests had previously lived at St. Mary's, but it had become too difficult to carry out all the essential business of the Parish while living some distance away, so he purchased No. 1, Milman Street, thus being the first Priest of St. Michael's to reside among his Parishioners. Though a strict disciplinarian he was a kind and respected Priest, and was familiar to the people of Pill as he walked around his Parish, carrying his renowned black-thorn walking stick. Any boy engaged in mischief, or playing truant from School, would take to his heels and disappear at the sign of that walking stick.



Fr. Hill died at Shanklin, in the Isle of Wight where he was convalescing. His body was brought to St. Michael's for burial. On the day of his funeral, the local Press reported that "half the district was in mourning for this good Priest. Blinds were drawn and people wept in the streets". At the Requiem Mass, the Celebrant was the Provost Provincial of the Institute of Charity, the Reverend T.H. Hughes. He was assisted by Fr. Elson, Fr. Ottway and Fr. Donnelly, and a Choir of Priests sang the Mass. Fr. D. Hickey read a message from Archbishop Mostyn (who was unable to be present) in which he described Fr. Hill as "an exemplary Priest, with a true apostolic spirit. The too-heavy burden of his work in Pill undoubtedly curtailed his life, and it was regrettable that he had not lived to see the realisation of his life's work - the new School. His name and memory would be enshrined in the hearts and memories of his beloved people, and of the children who attended the School which was to bear his name.

Fr. Hill's two brothers attended the Mass, together with a very large gathering of Rosminian and Secular Priests, and many representatives of Newport Civic and Educational Organisations. The Anglican Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, a close neighbour of St. Michael's, paid tribute to Fr. Hill who had worked side by side with him for many years to promote the well-being of the people of Pill. The Funeral cortege was attended by a remarkable demonstration of the affection and respect felt for Fr. Hill. All the shops and Public Houses in Pill were closed, and the Saturday morning crowds stood quietly as the slow procession passed along the 3 mile route to the Cemetery.

ESTABLISHED 1876. WEYMOUTH VILLA, WILTON PARK ROAD, SHANKLIN, I.W.

Rev. W. T. Hughes January 1926.

Dr. to WHITE BROS., UNDERTAKERS.

FUNERALS COMPLETELY FURNISHED. ESTIMATES GIVEN.

1926 Jan 5	Funeral of late Fr. Ernest Carmel Hill			
	Carriage for Coffin, Brass Follower & Gun for Brass in Hall & Reception	11		
	Carriage Coffin & Men services same day	15		
	Reception calling at St. Michael's church	2		
	Price of Hearse & Carriage pair	3		
	Price of 6 Priests fee	3		
	Expenses from Shanklin to Newport Mon	15		
	Price of Coffin Case & other services	7	6	
	Exp. from Pill to Shanklin	5	2	
	Attendance at Pallbearers	1	10	
		35	2	8

paid in full
15/1/26
White
for Mrs. Dixon

Funeral Bill for Fr. Hill

The Father Hill Memorial School

The School was built as a non-selective Senior Mixed School to accommodate 440 boys and girls, aged 11-14 years, resident in St. Michael's Parish. The building cost £15,000; the Architect was Cyril Bates. The scheme was instituted by Fr. Hill.

The Foundation-stone was laid on Trinity Sunday 1929 by His Grace Archbishop Mostyn; also present were Monsignor Irvine (whose family had close connections with St. Michael's) and the Reverend Father Trevor Hughes, Provost Provincial of the Institute of Charity. The day was so hot that the tar on the road outside the School softened, and the great crowd assembled there broiled in the blazing sun.

The Official Opening Ceremony took place on Sunday, 5th January, 1930, and was performed by Captain Michael O'Connell, a descendant of the famous Daniel O'Connell, and the building was blessed by Archbishop Mostyn, who wore a ring that had belonged to Daniel O'Connell.

Monday, 6th January, 1930, was the long expected day for the boys and girls to occupy their new School, and 429 boys and girls, after attending Mass in St. Michael's Church, walked to their new School, named the "Father Hill Memorial School", as a tribute to Father Ernest Hill who was responsible for its conception, and who had collected £14,000 of the £15,000 needed, and in so doing had exhausted himself. He died in 1926, and his Memorial Card reads:

"In the 52nd year of his life, the 22nd year of his Priesthood, and the 32nd year of his Religious Profession. All the years of his indefatigable Priestly life, save two, he gave to the people and children of St. Michael's. R.I.P."

His efforts to raise the necessary money were particularly strenuous, because at that time unemployment was rife, and the Parishioners had little, even nothing, to spare; yet their pennies and half-pennies were given weekly so that their children might receive as good an education as possible.

The first Head Teacher of the School was Miss Mary Dixon, who remained in charge until 1951. Her first entry in the School Log Book was: "Two things stand like stone. Kindness in another's troubles; courage in your own".

The recommendations of the 1944 Education Act required changes in the organisation of Schools, and in 1951 the School's status changed and it became the "Father Hill Secondary Modern School" and catered for boys from all the Catholic Parishes of Newport and neighbourhood. The girls went to the Holy Family School. Mr. O.T. Jones was appointed Headmaster and remained as Head until 1959. More changes were to follow when

Comprehensive Schools were introduced and in 1967, the School became the St. Joseph's Junior High School for Boys, and the Headmaster was Mr. Bernard Dunn.

Some of the teachers who taught in the Memorial School were: Miss H.C. Inns; Miss E. Fortune; Miss Priest; Miss J. O'Brien; Miss H. Barry; Miss H. Brunnock; Miss A. Hurley; Miss M. O'Sullivan; Miss E. Luxton; Miss C. Collins. It may interest some older Parishioners to read that the first girl admitted was Mary Lyons; the first boy was William Chambers.

No account of Father Hill School would be complete without a special mention of what is owed to Miss Helen Clare Inns, who taught there for 30 years, from the day the School opened until her retirement in July 1960. She did not seek promotion; she saw her vocation as a teacher at Father Hill School; and she gave everything she had to the children, the School, and the Church. Every Sunday Miss Inns would be found at the 10 a.m. Mass at St. Michael's with her Choir girls. She was a gentle, humble lady, with a nature that was self-effacing and she was completely without worldly ambition. She had a great influence on all the boys and girls she taught and encouraged them to live useful, happier lives in those years of deprivation and hopelessness. She faced life with a spirit of happy acceptance, and with a delightful sense of humour.

Among other teachers who taught at the Fr. Hill Secondary School and the St. Joseph's Junior High School were: Mr. P. Walsh; Mr. D. Whelan, Mr. M. McCarthy, Mr. E. Curran, Mr. Drewett and Mr. Bond, who taught woodwork.

Former pupils speak with affection of their school days at "Father Hill", and appreciate the teaching and the preparation for life that they received there.

Fr. Samuel Hill had devoted his life to the creation of a School for St. Michael's children. Due to Governmental changes and compulsory re-organisation, this ideal could not be maintained; but now, in 1988, the wheel has turned full circle; and once again, the children of St. Michael's Parish have their fine new School on the site of Fr. Hill's School, risen like a phoenix from the fire on the ashes of the old. May they appreciate, and love their School, in the way that the previous generations have done. Mr. Bernard Dunn, a retired Headmaster of what is still affectionately called "the Father Hill School", and who was regarded with respect by his boys, is continuing his work for St. Michael's children. He offered to undertake the onerous tasks of organising and being Treasurer of the fund, to raise the necessary money to clear the outstanding debt on the new School. As in the case of Father Hill, he is not daunted by the task of co-ordinating weekly door-to-door collections, helped by a band of willing collectors, all anxious that the spirit of devoted service to the Church and its children for which St. Michael's had been renowned in the past century, may continue into the days ahead.

Corpus Christi Processions

No account of St. Michael's history would be complete without a mention of the Corpus Christi Processions which were an exciting annual event and a highlight of the year for the Parish.

After weeks of enthusiastic preparation, on the great day, the School children, together with the members of the Parochial Confraternities and Sodalties, processed around the streets of the Parish which were gaily bedecked with flags and floral decorations. The girls wore white dresses and veils, and the boys proudly marched in their new suits and caps. The St. Michael's Drum and Fife Band, under their conductor, Mr. Sullivan, led the Procession around the streets of the Parish and back to the Church for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and the music of the Tubular Bells, ringing out appropriate Hymn tunes, added joy to the occasion.

Each successive year, the Procession became more impressive and it was decided that in June 1928 all the local Catholic Churches and Schools should combine for a united Service of Benediction at the Newport Athletic Grounds. Each School, led by its Band, met at its appointed assembly point and processed through the streets to Clarence Place, and then through the main gates of the Athletic Grounds to the Football Field. The streets, all along the various routes were lined with admiring spectators to watch the pretty little girls in white dresses and veils, and well-drilled boys proudly marching, and the many Confraternities adding colour to the spectacle with banners and colourful cloaks and insignia. Each School displayed its representative colour: St. Mary's, the blue of Our Lady; St. Michael's, yellow and gold, symbolical of the glory of the Archangel; Holy Cross, the red of the Cross; St. Joseph's Junior School, the green of St. Joseph.

An altar had been erected on the Football Field where the children had taken their places; spectators filled the Stands and the surrounding areas. Several Bands played appropriate music and accompanied the singing of Hymns. Fr. Hughes, the Rector of St. Mary's, accompanied by Fr. Fevez, of St. Michael's and by other Priests, carried the Blessed Sacrament, moving slowly through lines of kneeling, reverent children, to the Altar where he gave the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament to the vast crowd.

The "South Wales Argus", reporting the event, wrote:

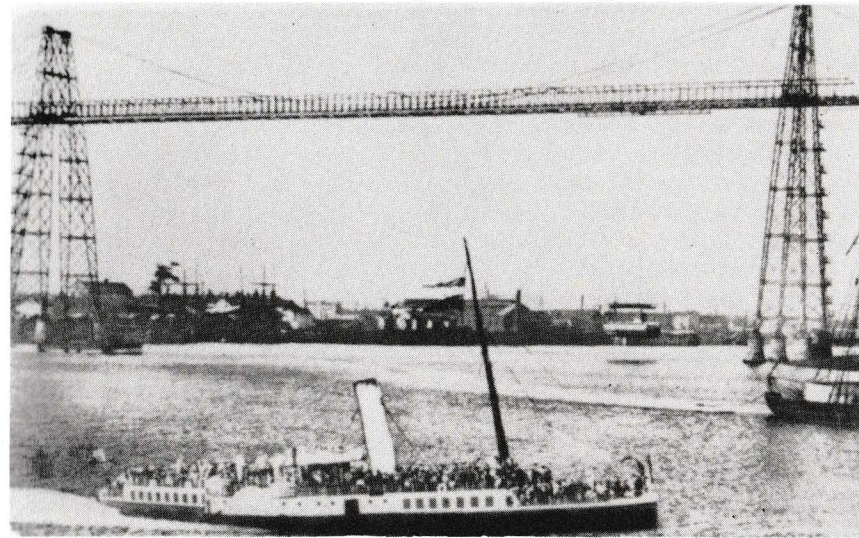
"A mere Procession became an Act of Faith. It is impossible for the pen to do justice to the picture presented; no artist could portray the beauty, the solemnity and the beautiful simplicity of the worship. It was a picture of reverence which no one will forget. The reverence, discipline and organisation were excellent".

Fr. Burris, Rector of St. Michael's, must have been a very relieved man at the end of that day, because he had the onerous responsibility of organising it all. He was warmly congratulated and complimented on its success. It is estimated that more than 2,000 children took part.

Following this grand celebration of the Feast, it was decided that for the future, each parish would revert to the previous custom of honouring the Feast of Corpus Christi in its own particular manner, and St. Michael's returned to its parochial Procession around the streets of Pill, with its own special fervour and devotion.

In Newport, the last public Corpus Christi Procession took place in Tredegar Park; the Archbishop of Cardiff was celebrating the Mass, when the heavens opened, and everyone was drenched in the downpour. Since 1985 the venue has been in Cardiff at the National Stadium.

The Transporter Bridge



Newport Transporter Bridge, 1906

This famous Bridge, a landmark in our Parish, was begun in 1904 on the design of a French engineer who had built a similar Bridge at Rouen, in North France. It was opened in 1906 and attracted interested engineers from many countries. At the time of writing this account there are discussions regarding its future, so a few details may be of interest in case it should be demolished.

The Bridge consists of 2 steel towers of latticework each 245 feet high, one on each bank of the River Usk, the width between them being 645 feet. At a height of 177 feet above high tide, a girder is suspended, supported by 16 steel wire cables which pass over the top of the towers and are carried back for 150 yards to an anchorage of about 2,000 tons each. To these, the ends of the cables are fastened in order to hold the platform in a permanent position. Across this platform run 4 lines of heavy rail on which a low track runs, carried on 4 rows of 15 wheels. 30 steel wire ropes are suspended within a few feet of high water mark, and are attached to the car. The car is 40 feet long, and 30 feet wide, and it is divided into 3 sections, the centre section for vehicles and the other 2 sections for passengers. It can carry up to 100 passengers. Wire ropes, worked by electric motors, draw the car across the river in 1 minute.

The Bridge has been out of action for some years, as it has been considered unsafe; it will be expensive to repair, but most townsfolk and particularly the people of Pill, consider it well worth preserving. The Rouen Bridge was destroyed during the last War, but ours resisted the German Bombers' efforts to destroy it; bombs and landmines dropped all around it, but it still stands, proudly linking the 2 banks of the River. Many Parishioners have happy recollections of going across the Bridge to spend some hours in

1926 - 1984



*Fr. Burris Fr. Donnelly
Fr. Vincent OFM Fr. Fevez Fr. Edmund OFM*

After the death of Father Hill in 1926, Fr. John Burris was appointed Parish Priest of St. Michael's with Fr. Fevez, Fr. Donnelly and Fr. John Barry to assist him. These Priests were friendly, zealous men, well-known and respected in Pill as they went around the streets of the Parish, visiting their people, and some times rounding-up truant boys.

They were obliged to devise many and various schemes to raise the necessary funds for the maintenance of the Church and School. The financial sacrifices demanded of the Parishioners were constant and considerable, and their response was generous. The people were enjoying a higher standard of living than they had ever experienced. There was work for men who were prepared to labour on the many new building sites in the town, and in the Iron, Steel and Engineering Works which had moved to Newport from the Midlands; and the Docks were busier than ever before, as Newport grew to be the most important coal-exporting Dock in South Wales. In 1906, the Transporter Bridge across the River Usk had been opened, and it proved its usefulness as men and vehicles crossed in ever increasing numbers between the Docks and Lysaght's Iron and Steel Works.

To maintain the "family spirit" of their Parishioners, the Priests encouraged membership of various Parish Sodalties and Groups, such as the Union of Catholic Mothers; the Guild of St. Ann; the League of the Cross; the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament; The Legion of Mary; and various Athletic and Sports groups. Concerts and Dances were held in the School Hall, and once a year the Catholics of Newport chartered one of the Pleasure Steamers that sailed to one or other of the sea-side resorts on the Bristol Channel and set off for a day's outing. Their destination could be Weston-Super-Mare, Barry or Ilfracombe, and as they sailed down the river, beneath the Transporter Bridge, the banks were thronged with excited children, waving and cheering in noisy farewell, as if the voyagers were off to settle in distant lands. The St. Michael's Band entertained them with jolly and well-known tunes, and the Bar on board did a roaring trade. At the end of the day, they returned to terra firma tired, sea-blown, and perhaps a little tipsy in some cases, but one and all resolved to repeat the adventure next year.

The "family" spirit of those days was of a unique, rare quality, so strong that people who have since moved to other districts frequently request to be taken "home" for their Requiem Mass and Funeral; and it is a moving

Coronation Park, an extensive stretch of land on the opposite bank of the river, where there were Swings and See-saws, and plenty of room for all kinds of ball games. Some of the men of the Parish gave their free time to train the girls and boys for Sports' Competitions, and St. Michael's children won many a medal and Cup in the Inter-Schools Sports Championship that was held annually on the Newport Athletic Grounds. Inter-School Soccer and Rugby Matches were also played in this Park on Saturday mornings; and it was a great boon for the children to have this open space for recreation instead of being restricted to the streets of the Parish.

Some very adventurous people have climbed to the top of the high steel towers of the Bridge and crossed to the other side by walking along a narrow cat-walk on the girder linking both sides. We are told that the descent of the opposite tower was even more hazardous than the ascent, but most people preferred to cross the river in the Car, a less nerve-shattering experience.

The Bridge was, for about 80 years, an inestimable asset for those of our Parishioners whose work was in one or other of the large Iron and Steel Works, in Corporation Road on the other side of the River Usk. Since it has been closed, their daily journey to and from work has necessitated involved travel through the Town, so our hope is that we shall, once more, have 'our' Bridge in working order.



Fr. Hamson and Fr. Bell

experience to be present on such occasions, and to see how old friends are reunited, memories rekindled, and the intricacies of family relationships unravelled. "Legis Plentitudo caritas" - "love is the fulfilling of the law" - is the motto of the Rosminian Order, and is Our Lord's injunction to each one of us; and this charity is a living reality among the St. Michael's older Parishioners. They know, and care for, each other in a manner that surprised and edified a visitor recently. "I've not experienced this truly caring spirit elsewhere," he said. "St. Michael's Parishioners are 'real' people, without pretensions and with a deeply rooted kindness for each other," and this is due to those Priests who encouraged and developed such a fine spirit of unity in the Parish; who were truly "Fathers" to their people; and who lived among them, sharing in the joys and sorrows of their daily lives. Perhaps those of us who have only known and lived in Rosminian Parishes may not fully appreciate how greatly we are blessed in our Priests who have a very special spirit of caring for their people. Each Priest, in his own particular way, lives only to serve the people committed to his charge, and as we look back over the past century, we realise our debt to them.

The period of prosperity that resulted from increased trade at the Docks began to fade as other South Wales ports absorbed much of the coal export, and times became difficult for those families in the Parish whose livelihood depended on the Docks. Then there came the War Years, 1939 - 1945, and the way of life in Pill underwent a drastic change. The men of the Parish either volunteered, or were conscripted into one of the Forces, and the long list of those who never returned may be read on the Memorial in the Pieta Chapel. So many of our men, belonging to the South Wales Borderers and the 1st Mons died in the hideous slaughter in Belgium; others joined the Navy and were "lost at sea". Women also, had to contribute to the War effort and many of our Parishioners worked in the Munitions Factories at C.H. Bailey's and the Uskside Works. Some people - profiteers - made a lot of money; others experienced great hardship. Mothers and wives were constantly anxious about the welfare of their menfolk, dreading to receive a telegram reporting them missing, or wounded, or killed. It was during those dark days that the close family spirit of St. Michael's proved its reality as each supported the other; and the Parish Priests had a very testing and difficult time strengthening and comforting their people. Life was not made any easier with the compulsory "black-out", and the War-time Instruction from the Minister for Home Security regarding the "blacking-out" of Churches, stated: "Where complete obscuration of all Church windows is impracticable, lighting is to be restricted to a minimum; only what is necessary to enable the Celebrant to read the Services, and sufficient to enable the people to move to and from their places".

St. Michael's Parish suffered particularly badly from the frequent attacks from German bombers, trying to destroy the Docks and the Muniton Factories. There was considerable damage to property, yet miraculously, St. Michael's Church and Presbytery escaped damage. Night after night, the

Bombers came and the people slept as best they could in Air-raid shelters, either in their own homes, or in the large Council ones, and in the mornings children arrived at School exhausted after sleepless and disturbed nights. Peace was declared eventually, and St. Michael's Parishioners celebrated it with relief and joy, and with "Street Parties"; but life had changed, and the once thriving Docks became almost completely idle. So many houses in the Parish had either been demolished, or badly damaged, as a result of war-time enemy bombing, that the Town Council decided to move the people of Pill to the new estates they were building on the outskirts of Newport. So fast was the rate of demolition and compulsory removal that it seemed there would soon be no Parish of St. Michael's left. It was then that the Parish Priest, Fr. Joseph Hassett, intervened. His firm plea to halt the wholesale destruction of his Parish and, instead, to repair damaged property was heeded, and slowly, but surely, the organisation of the Parish into a community began; a new generation was growing up, and Church and School had to relax some of the strict disciplines of the past.

Throughout those years, the Priests, supported by the Parishioners, made various alterations and improvements to the Church. The interior was redecorated, the 14 Stations of the Cross which had hung on the walls for many years were replaced by a new set of simple and dignified design. Each group is of carved wood, and stands on a wooden base; and a silver plate bears the names of those in whose memory it was donated. A new Altar, with an impressive Tabernacle, replaced the original one; the Rood was removed, and the old wooden pulpit was replaced with a stone one. New benches had been installed; electricity replaced gas lighting, and several statues had been given to the Church. The fine statue of our Patron Saint, St.

Michael, is particularly impressive, it is of carved oak, and depicts the Archangel slaying a coiled, scaly dragon (a symbol of the devil) with a long spear. On his right arm he bears a shield on which are the words: "Quis ut Deus". He wears a small golden helmet and gold laced sandals and a leather breast plate. His apparel is coloured in shades of russet-brown and red, edged with gold, and his gaze is downwards as if watching over us. The extensive span of his golden wings gives an impression of space and power, and they give height to the statue which stands on a pedestal. The overall height is about 10 feet. It was a gift in memory of Mary and Albert Olsen.



Saturday, August 2nd, 1986



Celebration of the Centenary Mass

This day, the centenary of the laying of the Foundation Stone of St. Michael's Church, was a particularly happy occasion. At 7.30 p.m. the Church was filled with a great crowd for the Solemn High Mass to celebrate the event. Lighted candles and flowers were placed before Fr. Michael Bailey's Memorial to remind us of our debt to the founder of the Church, and there was a warm family spirit as former Parishioners joined with us.

The Celebrant was the Parish Priest, Fr. Anthony Hamson who was assisted by 2 former Parish Priests - Fr. Jermyn and Fr. Hassett. Also in the Sanctuary were Fr. Bell and Brother Furlong, from the Rosminian House of Studies at Derryswood.

The Mass began with a Procession during which was sung the hymn, 'Praise, my soul, the King of heaven', after which Fr. Hamson welcomed all present and described the scene of 100 years ago; and he read the sermon preached on that occasion by Bishop Hedley. After this, the Litany of the Saints was sung, in Latin, by the Catholic Boys' Choir under their leader Mr. Michael Landers who intoned the petitions. Prayers followed, and then the Lesson, read by Fr. Hassett, the previous Parish Priest; after which the Choir sang the Gradual Psalm, and Brother Furlong read the Gospel. Fr. Hamson's sermon drew lessons from the past to encourage and inspire us in the present and for the future. Following the recitation of the Creed, Fr. Bell read the Bidding Prayers, and a list of those Priests who have ministered at St. Michael's from its foundation to the present day.

There is another statue of St. Michael, sculptured in stone, standing in a niche on the outside South wall of the Church. Above the Altar in the War Memorial Chapel is a Pieta - a statue of Our Lady holding in her arms the dead body of her Son; and above the Lady Chapel Altar is a statue of Our Lady crowned, with the Child Jesus. A coloured statue of the Sacred Heart is placed over the Altar in the Chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is now reserved. At the West end of the Church is a statue of St. Anthony, which is of good quality and carved in oak; it was given in memory of William and Helen Lane; and at this end of the Church, too, is a large, imposing statue of St. Peter's Chair, a replica of the famous original in Rome. A statue of St. Joseph stands in an alcove on the North aisle.

We also have a reproduction of the original painting in Rome of "Our Lady of Perpetual Succour". It is set in a frame of carved, gilded wood in Gothic style, and is a poignant reminder of the steadfast faith in the face of great sorrow of Ann Bickerstaff. The inscribed plate reads: "This picture has been placed here by Ann Bickerstaff in memory of her husband John Bickerstaff lost at sea, November 15th, 1916; and of her son, James Bickerstaff, lost at sea, December 19th, 1916. May they rest in peace".

The lady members of St. Ann's Guild cared for the Vestments and the Altar, and some beautiful articles for use in the Mass were given.

Then came the decrees following the 2nd Vatican Council and sweeping changes were ordered. The Blessed Sacrament had to be removed from the Tabernacle on the High Altar to a side Altar; English replaced the age-old Latin in the Mass; the Altar was brought forward to the front of the Sanctuary and the Priest faced the congregation; the Pulpit was removed and replaced with a Lectern in the Sanctuary from which the Readings and Sermon were given; lay men and women took over various liturgical offices; the Communion rails were removed; the Organ console was brought down from the Gallery to a position at the back of the Church; Folk Masses were introduced; the Baptismal Font was removed from the Baptistry to the Lady Chapel. The "wind of change" certainly swept through St. Michael's, as through all the Catholic Church, and people had to weather the storm.

Fr. Troop succeeded Fr. Hassett, with Fr. John Daley to assist him, and when these Priests moved to other Parishes, our present Rector, Fr. Anthony Hamson was appointed as Parish Priest, firstly with Fr. Daley as Assistant, and later, with Fr. Robert Bell.

In February 1988, Brother Charles Sormany, of the Institute of Charity, came to our Parish, and he is a great help to Fr. Hamson and the Parishioners; an indefatigable worker, a zealous visitor and a man of considerable talents.

During the taking of the Offertory an old, greatly loved Hymn was sung, "Bring flowers of the fairest", which brought back memories of "the good old days" to many of the older Parishioners. The rite of the Mass proceeded as usual, and during the distribution of Holy Communion to the hundreds of people present, 2 favourite old Hymns were sung with tremendous fervour: "Sweet Sacrament divine", and "Soul of my Saviour" - no Hymn Books were needed for these!

Before the final Prayers and the Blessing, Fr. Hamson thanked the Choir and the Altar Servers, with special mention of Mr. Brunnock, our "dear Billa"; and then the ceremony concluded with the final hymn, "Faith of our fathers", which raised the rafters and resounded in the neighbouring streets.

We then adjourned to the School Hall for refreshments, provided and served by the ever-faithful Union of Catholic Mothers - and so ended a truly memorable day, a "family" reunion, full of the fine spirit typical of St. Michael's parishioners throughout the past century.

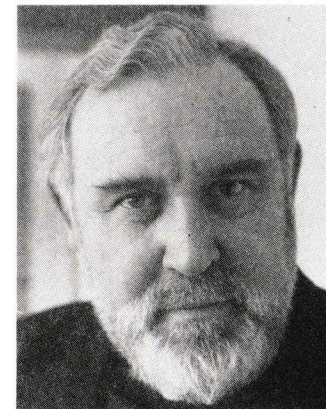
Among the Priests who were present and who con-celebrated were: Fr. Cuddihy, Fr. Tynan, Fr. Brennan and Fr. Scanlan. Also present were the Reverend Brian Stares, Vicar of the neighbouring Anglican Church of St. Stephen's.



His Grace, The Archbishop of Cardiff, and Priests

1983 - 1988

With the appointment of Father Hamson as Parish Priest in September 1983, St. Michael's embarked on a new, exciting chapter in its history - a period of expansion and of ecumenism.



Fr. Anthony Hamson was educated at Ratcliffe College from 1942 - 1947, and on leaving school he entered the Institute of Charity, going first to the House of Studies at Rugby, and then on to Wadhurst. In 1949, he was sent to the Rosminian House of Studies at Porta Latina, Rome, and he was ordained Priest, on the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, 1957, in the Church of the Twelve Apostles, Rome.

The following thirty years of his apostolate have been spent at St. Alban's, Cardiff; on the Rosminian African Mission at Soni, Tanganika; as a teacher at Grace Dieu; at St. Patrick's and St. Mary's, Newport; and now at St. Michael's.

While on the Staff at St. Mary's, Fr. Hamson became concerned about people who were homeless or were living in very difficult conditions, and in 1972, with 2 or 3 others, "Family Care" was started, with him as Chairman. From this very small beginning the Association has grown rapidly, and like the tiny mustard seed of which we read in the Gospels, it has developed into a large tree with its branches spreading ever wider - so much so, that on 1st March, 1988 the Mayor of Newport opened its thousandth home.

Since coming to St. Michael's, he has introduced a variety of parochial projects. He has invited the Welsh College of Music and Drama to give performances in the Church of T.S. Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral", and "The Law of the Land" - a play about local involvement with the Chartist Movement. The students of the College also presented a concert of classical music; a performance of "Stabat Mater"; and Puppet plays for the children.

In April 1985, the headlines in the local Press read: "St. Michael's Church - the Cathedral of Pill - is taking on a new role in the community as a centre of music-making. The "Dorothy Adams Singers" presented an exciting Programme which included the premiere presentation of Bizet's "Te Deum"; Haydn's "Missa Brevis"; Handel's "Coronation Anthem", and a selection of solos, trios and quartets".

The Parish has a sung Latin Mass on the 1st Sunday of the month, and a Folk Mass on the 2nd Sunday.

On the four Sundays in May 1985, Fr. Hamson invited Ministers of four Protestant Churches to preach at the 10.30 a.m. Sunday Mass, and we heard a Baptist, a Methodist, an Anglican and a Quaker explain their particular religious beliefs. He has been assisted in these activities, firstly, by Fr. John Daley, then by Fr. Robert Bell; and when Fr. Bell left to become the Parish Priest in March, Cambridgeshire, Brother Charles Sormany came to St. Michael's as Pastoral Assistant.

A strong bond of ecumenical friendship has been formed between our Parish and the neighbouring Anglican Parish of St. Stephen's; and in 1986 when St. Stephen's celebrated its centenary, permission was granted by both the Catholic and Anglican Bishops for an Anglican Eucharist to be celebrated in St. Michael's Church. The invitation was reciprocated the following year when, as part of our centenary celebrations, we were invited to St. Stephen's and Archbishop Ward celebrated Mass there, with the Bishop of Monmouth robed in the Sanctuary.

On 19th October, 1985, the English Province of the Institute of Charity celebrated 150 years of work in our country, with a Concelebrated High Mass in Canterbury Cathedral. The Dean and Chapter of Canterbury willingly and graciously granted permission for this unique celebration - the first occasion on which a Catholic Mass had been offered there since the days of the



Thanksgiving Mass - Canterbury - 19th October, 1985

Reformation - and they assisted Fr. Hamson, who had the responsibility of its organisation, in every possible way. A large contingent of St. Michael's parishioners set off by train at the crack of dawn to join the many

Rosminians who came from all over the country. It was a truly grand event; the Pope sent his greetings and blessing; the Father General of the Institute of Charity - the Most Reverend Giovanni Battista Zantedeschi - was the Celebrant; the Address was given by the Provost Provincial - the Very Reverend Fr. Augustine Little; the Cathedral Choir sang the Mass; and among the vast congregation were many Rosminian Priests, Brothers, Nuns and Ascribed Members. St. Michael's was well represented, and all returned home later in the day, feeling inspired, and privileged to have shared in the event; and many thanks were offered to Fr. Hamson who had undertaken such a feat of detailed organisation with his customary, undaunted enthusiasm, and had carried it through so perfectly.

In May 1986, he took a group of parishioners to Belgium, firstly to watch the famous Procession of the Holy Blood in Bruges, and then to Brussels and the Ardennes, where we were able to hear Mass in the Benedictine Abbey at Maredsous. In 1987, he arranged another visit to Bruges; and this year 1988, we went to Mont St. Michel and various historical places in Normandy. In November 1987, he led a party of Parishioners to Rome to join in the National Pilgrimage for the Beatification of 85 Martyrs of England and Wales. Thus, in various ways, our limited parochial horizons are being broadened.

Amid all these activities, the Parish has undertaken a very important project - namely, to build a new School for the Infants and Juniors. The former Father Hill Memorial School has been demolished, and on its site a fine new modern School has been built for our children.

The Centenary of the laying of the Foundation stone of St. Michael's was celebrated on Saturday, 2nd August 1986; the Centenary of the opening of the Church was celebrated on the Feast of St. Michael, Tuesday, 29th September 1987 when a Concelebrated Mass was offered by His Grace, the Most Reverend John Aloysius Ward, O.F.M. and the Priests of the Deanery;



Fr. Willett The Abbot of Belmont Abbey Fr. Little with Fr. Hamson

on Sunday, 4th October, a Civic Mass was offered by the Most Reverend Allan Rees, O.S.B., the Abbot of Belmont Abbey, Hereford. The Very Reverend Augustine Little, I.C., Provost Provincial of the Institute of Charity

gave an Address and the Abbot spoke of the goodness of God, and of the faith and loyalty of the Catholics of Pill during the past 100 years. The choir of St. David's Cathedral, Cardiff, sang at this Mass, and Fr. Hamson invited the visitors, amongst whom were the Lord Lieutenant of Gwent; Mr. Paul Flynn, M.P., the Deputy-Mayor of Newport; and several local dignitaries, to Lunch after the Mass.

On Sunday, March 6th, 1988 the Scuola of Belmont Abbey came to sing at the 10.30 a.m. Mass. The Abbey is dedicated to St. Michael, so we, with them, share the same Patron.

Our Parish has cause to be thankful for so many dedicated workers - the Teachers in the School; the Altar Servers; the Vergers, the small, but very faithful hard-working band of ladies who keep the Church so beautifully clean and polished; Mrs. Flynn who so lovingly cares for the Altar linen and Miss Luxton who cares for the Altar vessels; the Ministers of the Eucharist, the Readers; the faithful Caretakers of the Church and School; the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and of the Legion of Mary; the Catholic Boys' Choir with their leader, Mr. Michael Landers; the Flower Arrangers; the ever-willing ladies of the Union of Catholic Mothers; the School Fund Collectors and Treasurer, Mr. Bernard Dunn, the Editors of the Weekly Newsletter; and those who organise various weekly gatherings such as "Bingo", and a Prayer Group, and the "Peace and Justice" Commission; and the School Governors.

By such involvement, Parishioners serve the Church, each in his, or her, particular way, and help each other.

We have come a long way from the days of the five people attending a Mass in the upper room in Market Street, and the three little cottages bought by Fr. Michael Bailey to serve as a Chapel and School for the Catholics of Pill. At the time of ending this brief account of the history of our Parish (Easter 1988), there remains more celebrations to come, and the very important opening of our New School; it is our hope that someone will complete the account.

Random Gleanings

We are told that Fr. Jermyn had the old wooden Pulpit removed because it had wood-worm. It was feared its floor might collapse and that the Priest might suddenly disappear, (while fervently preaching), from the sight of his astonished congregation.

Many are the tales told of Fr. Hill's cherished walking stick, his inseparable companion on his daily walks. Many boys had felt it, and all feared it - which would account for the rapid scattering of those with a guilty conscience when he was seen approaching.

Miss Cissie Geary R.I.P. - a faithful, devoted Parishioner who, in all weathers, each morning and evening, year after year, was the "keeper of the keys" of St. Michael's Church.

Mr. William ("Billa") Brunnock, a former pupil of our Schools, is greatly respected by everyone; and a worthy recipient of a "Bene Merenti" medal, awarded for his faithful service to St. Michael's. "Billa" serves daily Mass and is a fine example to the younger Altar Servers by his reverent and dignified bearing.

The Burke family who lived opposite the Church were remembered with blessing by those Priests of St. Michael's in the hard times. There was always a welcome and a meal when they needed it.

According to the Cardiff 1988 "Directory and Year Book", the estimated Catholic population of our Parish is 1,456; Mass attendance is 372. Where are "the lost sheep"?

Our annual Pensioners' Fish and Chip Supper, with musical entertainment, and a present for each of the 100 invited guests, is a greatly appreciated evening, and is enjoyed by the "old ones" who love to get together for a chat and exchange of news.

Religious vocations include Fr. Donald Campbell who became a Priest in the Westminster Archdiocese; he retained warm regards for his boyhood at St. Michael's: "the happiest days of my life", he said.

Brother Michael McCarthy, one of our former pupils, and a son of Mr. John McCarthy, one of our Parishioners, has entered the Institute of Charity.

Sister Maria Lannigan joined the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, and is now their Superior.

Sister Mary Williams, daughter of our good "Jim" and "Biddy" Williams, made her Final Profession as a Sister of the Community of St. Joseph of Ancey, in St. Michael's Church on 30th August, 1986

Our Parish seems to have more than its fair share of Pubs, though not quite as many now as 50 years ago when, we were told, "there's a Pub on every corner of Pill". Our next-door neighbour is "The Orange Tree"; and around the corner, in Portland Street is the "Church House", which has a Plaque on the outside front wall stating that it was the home of W.H. Davies who was the grandson of Captain Francis Davies, the owner. As a lad, Davies was unruly and caused his Grandfather a lot of worry; he was frequently in conflict with authority, and on one occasion he received 12 strokes of the birch at Newport Magistrates Court for theft. He led a wild, adventurous life, and wrote his "Autobiography of a Super Tramp" which is now regarded as a classic; and he is established as one of the best of modern English poets.

For much of the first half of the last century Catholics owned no consecrated ground in the Newport Cemetery in which to bury the dead. Some Priests were buried in the Catholic ground at Bristol; Fr. Davison was buried in front of the Sanctuary in St. Mary's Church; Dr. Hawkins in a corner of St. Mary's Lady Chapel. The burial ground in Newport, prior to the opening of the present St. Woolos Cemetery when Catholics and Jews were allotted space, was around St. Woolos Church. Owing to the anti-Catholic prejudice of those days, we were forbidden to mark graves with head-stones so that it is not possible to discover exactly where the dead were buried. All this changed with the opening of the new Cemetery, and with a more tolerant understanding of the Catholic position, and the Funeral of Fr. Michael Bailey was an example of this improved attitude. It was customary for men to walk in front of the hearse, bowler-hatted and in dark suits. The carriages were drawn by horses bearing black plumes on their head harness, and everyone involved wore deep black mourning clothes, even black edged handkerchiefs. As the cortege passed, all traffic would halt; bystanders stand quietly; and men raise their hats. A Funeral was a very solemn occasion.

The graves of many of the past Priests of St. Michael's are in the Newport Cemetery on a plot near the little Catholic Chapel there.



wearing his Lonsdale Belt

Johnny Basham -
"with a heart of gold, and fist of steel"

There have been few finer sportsmen than one old Pill boy - Johnny Basham, renowned as one of the most polished boxers at any weight in Europe.

He was a man of grit and determination, witty and light-hearted, and generous to a fault. He was the justifiably proud winner of the coveted Lonsdale Belt. He started work as a Newspaper boy in Pill, and before he died, he jokingly remarked,

"I can't box any longer, but I can always go back to selling Newspapers". He made thousands of pounds during his career: he spent it, and died a poor man. At one time he was an instructor at a Boxing School in France, where he had a few rounds with the Duke of Windsor (then the Prince of Wales). At the end of the bout, he offered the Prince a cigarette: "Have a Woodbine, Sir?" The Prince laughingly accepted.

He arranged a Boxing Tournament in Newport to raise money for Fr. Hill for the new School, and no charitable request to him was ever refused, but many people took advantage of his generosity. He died in 1947, and thousands of people, from all walks of life, lined the streets to the Cemetery. Recently, some friends raised money to mark his grave with a tombstone - "to the memory of a great sportsman, and a gentleman."

It is hoped that an Account of St. Michael's School - the present School, and the new one to be opened in September - will be published later this year.

We conclude with the Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel, our Patron Saint.

"Holy Michael, Archangel, defend us in the day of battle; be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the devil; may God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou, Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust down to hell Satan and all wicked spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls".

This brief account of the past 100 years of St. Michael's Church and Parish has been written and compiled by:

Gwendoline B. Phillips

Priests who have served at St. Michael's, Pill

1809 - 1847 Benedictines

Father William Barnes
Father John Haley
Father Ignatius Richards
Father David Morton
Father Robert Gates

Father John Burke
Father Richard Portal
Father Edward Metcalfe
Father Davison
Doctor Baldacconi

1847 - 1988 Rosminians

Father Hutton
Father Signini
Father Fordham
Father Rinolfi
Father Cavalli
Father Michael Bailey
Father Edmund Butcher
Father Samuel Hill
Father Thomas Nolan
Father John Fevez
Father Joseph Cummins
Father Alexander Donnelly
Father John Burns
Father John Barry
Father Joseph Hurley
Father Charles Cunningham
Father John Guise
Father James McAreyve
Father Edwin Manning
Father Palmer
Father John Davies

Father Wilfred Davies
Father John O'Neill
Father William Gates
Father James Hughes
Father Bernard Norton
Father James Connolly
Father George Scott
Father John Keating
Father Wilfred Smith
Father John Buckner
Father John Jermyn
Father Herbert Troop
Father Daniel Payne
Father Richard Foley
Father Joseph Hassett
Father Arthur Holland
Father John Daley
Father John O'Dwyer
Father Anthony Hamson
Father Robert Bell