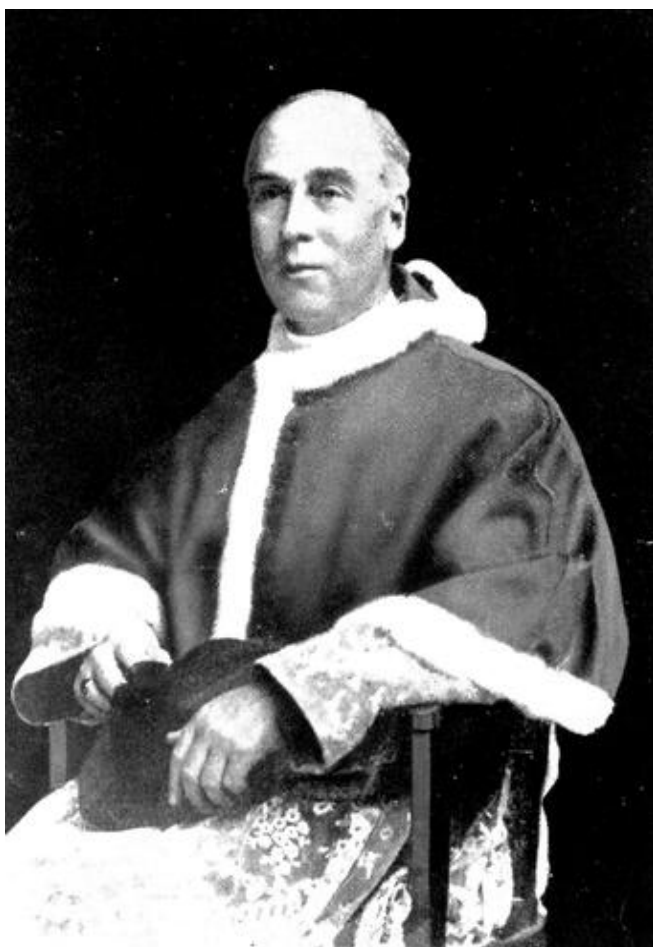


SECTION 'C' – THE REMAINDER OF THE 20TH CENTURY

From 1929 the diocesan priests coming into the Parish were to see it fit into a wider context demanding support from our relatively prosperous area. Many of these priests came from the grass roots rather than from an institution.

Whereas the Jesuits had maintained diaries that showed the development of the Parish, those who followed were less inclined and this history has relied on the research of a range of documents and the memories of parishioners.

1929 – 1943 Canon Ernest Garnett

Arriving from Wellingborough on 2 September 1929, Canon Garnett, who had been ordained in 1898, was the first priest to be appointed by the Bishop of Northampton to Bury St Edmunds. It was a turbulent time in the Country's history. The Labour Government led by Ramsay MacDonald could never have survived the collapse of the American stock exchanges which brought about the great depression. Another general election here in 1931 failed to stabilise matters. The resulting National Government led still by MacDonald but, with few members of his own party in the House of Commons, was even less stable. A year later in 1932 there were three million unemployed in Britain. In rural areas there had already been years of hardship due to the level of food prices. Another election in 1935 installed Stanley Baldwin as Prime Minister with mainly Conservative support. Neville Chamberlain succeeded him and soon held meetings with Adolf Hitler, the

German Chancellor. At the third of these encounters he presented an ultimatum that German military invasions must cease. The inevitable war followed in September 1939.

Members of the Guild were active in attending to the needs of the Church, noting in 1932 the lack of a chalice, that cassocks and cottas were worn out and beyond repair. Guild members held a whist drive so that proceeds could go to the redecoration of the statue of the Sacred Heart. On 13 November 1938 the Guild's accounts recorded that a new pole had been bought for the banner of St Edmund.

In 1935 King George V died, to be succeeded by his son who became King Edward VIII. A year later he abdicated in order to marry a divorcée. His younger brother then became King George VI. The Coronation in 1937 was close to the centenary of our Church. Canon Garnett played a very large part in the celebrations. A centenary fête was opened by Lady Home in the convent grounds of St Andrew's

Castle. There was a baby show judged by Dr O'Meara, a concert given by the pupils of St Louis High School and another by R W Cobbold and company. A whist drive in the convent, dancing in a marquee, many stalls and sideshows were also enjoyed. In the Church Haller's Missa Tertia included a motet from the Mass of Dedication of a Church.

Following High Mass at 11.30 am on Tuesday 14 December 1937, an official luncheon in the Guildhall was attended by 50 invited guests including the Mayor and Mayoress with other dignitaries. The Mayor gave a warm speech referring to the important part played by St Edmund's in the Town's life. Canon Garnett replied by referring to one of his predecessors in the early 17th century, a chaplain to Coldham Hall, Thomas Garnett SJ, who had been arrested on the orders of the Chief Magistrate prior to being hanged, drawn and quartered. Canon Garnett said that it cheered him that on this occasion the Chief Magistrate (the Mayor) had surrendered his chair amicably to another Catholic priest!

Canon Garnett had been an avid cricketer and tennis player in his earlier days and his recreations included fishing and shooting. He held Vespers on Friday evenings. Social events took place in the bare Crypt as they had in Fr O'Gorman's time. And each year there was a fête for the schoolchildren. His housekeeper, Miss Russell, was a formidable lady who ruled the roost and scared the schoolchildren more than a little.

1943 – 1953 Fr Frederick Lockyer

He was popular but in poor health, with the reputation of being a theologian.



His first curate was the recently ordained Fr Anthony Throckmorton (of the famous recusant family) who visited the sick and others on his large motorcycle. Very tall, he wore a war-surplus flying jacket and usually a large crucifix. He moved to Cambridge (English Martyrs) and is somewhat strangely commemorated by a brass plaque on Southwold Pier.

Fr Lockyer's next curate was Fr Gerald Conlon who had come from the Durham area where he had been a teacher. He had also been a member of the local amateur operatic society and knew all the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas – all parts! With his great devotion to Our Lady he arranged the flowers himself with blooms set in tiers as a background to Our Lady of Lourdes. He took over the parish until Fr Houghton arrived after Fr Lockyer's departure to become parish priest of St Mary Magdalen in Ipswich. He later moved to Luton where he eventually died following a heart attack.

1954 – 1969 Fr Bryan Houghton

His towering presence made him as flamboyant a priest in the post-war years as Fr Vincent O'Gorman had been during the Great War and inter-war years. Born in Dublin in 1911, the son of a professional soldier and a mother who had served as a Hoffraulein in Berlin in the household of Princess Victoria, his upbringing was across Europe where his mother had homes in Paris, Berlin and the Cote d'Azur. At the age of 13 years he went to Stowe School soon after its foundation; thence to Christ Church, Oxford where he graduated with a first in modern history. He returned to Paris to be a banker.

Following a visit to the Soviet Union with his friend Christian Dior where he became indignant at the cruelty by Bolsheviks to minority ethnic groups, he converted to Catholicism in 1933.

As his autobiography {*Unwanted Priest*: ISBN 9 781621 388111} records, the era of his mother's ill health in 1934 caused him to fall on hard times. Penniless, he lodged in a Cambridge slum before resorting to scavenging dustbins for food and seeking shelter at night. Upon his mother's death, his fortunes revived and he studied in Rome for the priesthood, being ordained in 1940. He served in Slough where he provided large amounts of his money for the Church and Catholic education there.

His arrival in Bury St Edmunds in 1954 coincided with that of his curate, Fr Cureton. Fr Houghton maintained a somewhat opulent yet eccentric style at the Presbytery and within the Chapel. A man



of great intellect, his forte was an ability to converse at all levels and to use humour to good effect. His sermons were legendary and attracted large audiences, often demonstrating contrast. Perhaps this was exemplified best in his discourse to his congregation that they could not '*pop up to heaven like champagne corks*'; yet on each celebratory parish occasion, especially on the feast of St Edmund, he provided champagne for all to savour!

Fr Houghton and his curate began with a programme of visits to known Catholics, the former covering those in the villages whilst Fr Cureton was assigned the town and the hospitals. At this time our Catholic population was recorded as 630 with 478 having performed their Easter duties. In that year 22 baptisms and 12 weddings occurred and five people converted to the Faith. Fr Cureton was replaced by Fr Robert Owen after four years and later he too gave way to Fr Casapieri (pictured left). He went in 1967 and Fr Stephen Kealey came in.

Fr Houghton's major interest was to achieve growth in the local Catholic population together with the expansion of Catholic education and the development of schools. By 1958 this growth was apparent in the parish records, there being a Catholic population of 1600 of whom 614 had undertaken Easter duties. Significant increases occurred within the ministry with there being 60 baptisms, 37 weddings and 25 converts. Fr Houghton's influence on St Edmund's Catholic School is fully described in a separate book entitled '*Taught to be Good*'. This also speaks of his energy and personality. It is not unknown for a parish priest to drive the school bus but few of them acquire a postman's used overcoat to keep out the cold (it is said to have cost sixpence).

In 1959 it was Fr Houghton's initiative to create the new central door at the time of redecoration of the Church. As reported in the Bury Free Press of 9 October 1959 the colour scheme was to replicate that of the 1830s – dull yellow pilasters, white wall surfaces, grey recesses, white cornice, gilt capitals, the coffers of the ceiling true blue, the mouldings white and grey and the main straps white.

On the Queen's visit to the town in 1960 Fr Houghton drove his blue sports car to join other clergy greeting her. His rich connections and ability to get on with dignitaries helped the parish and its schools to develop into excellent educational establishments.



In 1960 St Edmund's Church was the centre of a gathering of 300 Catenians, followed by lunch in the Athenaeum. In October that year it hosted the diocesan rally of the Catholic Women's League, again numbering around 300. As reported in the Arrow magazine, the extensions to St Edmund's School were opened and blessed during a visit that day by the Bishop. The picture shows the Bishop Mgr Leo Parker blessing the School crucifix in the presence of Fr Houghton, the Mayor Mr Davies, Major Cotton. The altar server was John Saunders.



The humour of Fr Houghton was always evident in his parish writings, especially where monetary appeals were made. His account of the school opening read as follows, *'The school is really as smart as the ladies. Real lovely I call it! The architect Mr Boxall deserves lots of praise. The parishioners were wonderful. Fr Houghton had a vision of a platform full of VIPs addressing a solitary, wide-eyed child with a running nose and sucking a lolly. Not a bit of it! All the folk were there – and they clapped at the right time and laughed even when it wasn't very funny. A good time was had by all except the headmistress, our splendid Sister Gabrielle who had the task to provide tea for a couple hundred more people than she expected. The task was rendered no easier by the urns leaking, the gas failing, the sugar falling into the hot water, the milk running out and the children playing marbles with the biscuits. However, she carried*

the whole thing off with the dignity and good humour of one schooled to suffering, to whom even the unexpected is inevitable. One of the remarkable things about the school is that it is paid for. This is due in no small measure to the work carried out on the duplicator appeals and that sort of thing, you

know. In fact, the parish has had to invest in a larger and better one. This explains the following advertisement:

ADVERTISEMENT

No parish complete without a DUPLICATOR

FOR SALE: portable Roneo 250, latest model, perfect condition

Only £23

Apply immediately: Houghton's Stores, Ecclesiastical Furnishers,

21 Westgate Street, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Throughout the time of Fr Houghton in Bury St Edmunds, Mrs Conington maintained the Presbytery as its housekeeper and pseudo secretary. She was immensely helpful to those who visited and greatly devoted to the needs of the Church.

In his era the organ was chosen with the aid of Dr Alan Rowe continuing the commitment in the parish to provide music of the highest quality.

Fr Houghton was devoted to our patron St Edmund. In 1960 he commissioned and paid a German sculptor Maximilian Leuthenmayr to create a shrine to the Saint. God the Father surmounting the shrine was a wood carving by a renowned 18th century sculptor Ignaz Gunther. God the Son was in the form of the processional cross, the figure of Our Lord was Florentine of the early Renaissance, mounted in 1775 by Caspar Xavier Spideldey, a goldsmith of Augsburg. The Holy Ghost and shroud were the work of Mr Leuthenmayr. Opinion within the congregation was divided - a work of art or a garish monstrosity? Upon the departure of Fr Houghton, it was removed and only the Saint's statue remained in its position. At this time, in the process of intended relocation, the marble font sustained damage and became cracked.



As mentioned in Section 'F' Fr Houghton acquired many additions to the fabric of the Church. His other notable provision was the replacement of the wooden High Altar. Whilst visiting his friend Dr

Patrick O'Meara who lived in Westgate Street, Bury St Edmunds, he saw what appeared to be a marble Italian bath in the garden and decided that this would make a very fine altar. Dr O'Meara willingly donated the bath (which had originally been in a house in Guildhall Street). The bath was dirty and full of rust marks but Mr George Pemberton agreed to fund its cleaning and installation. It was hauled manually by six men through the streets of the town to Mossfords' stone masons in King's Road where it was cleaned and fitted with four clawed feet and four marble columns (carved by Mr John Coffey) and provided with a new marble top. Weighing five tons, it was then transported on a four-wheeled truck and pushed and pulled on its return journey to Westgate Street before being manipulated by planks, ropes and rollers into its resting place within the Sanctuary in 1964. The parish magazine 'The Arrow' (September 2006) stated *'The three (sic) teeth of St Edmund were placed in the altar before the top was sealed on. At the rear of the Altar appears the inscription 'D D George Pemberton 1965'.*

Although the Church had then been used for worship for 128 years, it had lacked a 'proper' altar. The installation of the altar led to the Church being consecrated on 31 March 1965 by The Right Rev Leo Parker, Bishop of Northampton. As reported in the East Anglian Daily Times *'Catholic schoolchildren waving yellow and white papal flags greeted the Bishop and a party of Catholic clergy from the deanery as they walked the bounds of the Church in procession before entering the Church for the consecration service'.*



The front of the altar



The rear of the altar

However, the altar's large size allowed little room for manoeuvre around it and together with the steps in the sanctuary posed a safety hazard - as described in Section 'D', by 2011 its days were over.

It was not surprising that over 200 people including non-Catholics gathered at the Athenaeum in 1965 for a reception to mark his silver jubilee as a priest. A cheque for £925 was presented to him by Mr Pemberton as a token of appreciation and a book containing the names of all 1,070 subscribers was presented on behalf of the youth of the parish by John Saunders. With typical humour, Fr Houghton said, *"I am God's commercial traveller, what I have to sell is worth buying. I hope I have managed to sell it reasonably adequately to you. My parish is about 200 square miles and covers about a dozen villages."* Dr O'Meara organised the presentation which was made in the presence of the Mayor Mr Sewell who added that in the 11 years that he had been in Bury Fr Houghton had earned widespread esteem and affection. He had made an immense contribution to the life of the town.

St Benedict's opened in 1967 as a mixed secondary school but later became an upper comprehensive school for ages 13 -18. The Head Teacher was Francis Pardon.

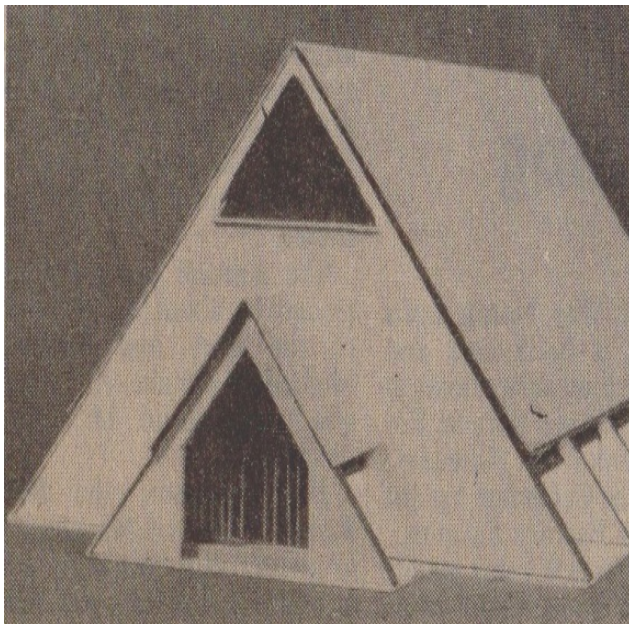
Fr Houghton was also a traditionalist who, dismayed by the changes brought about in the liturgy by Vatican II, expressed his disgust and retired in 1969. In a tribute to him John (later Judge) Sheerin stated, *"His service to the parish over the past 12 years cannot be overstated and he has been responsible for maintaining the dignity and respect for the Roman Catholic Church not only in Bury St Edmunds but throughout East Anglia. It is difficult to imagine how the present strength of our parish could have been achieved without his leadership and guidance."*

He settled once more in France, this time in Viviers, where he tended his land and, with permission from the Vatican, celebrated the old (incorrectly referred to by some people as the Tridentine) Mass each day at the Cathedral of St Vincent. His writings showed him to be sympathetic to the ideas of Archbishop Lefebvre but not to the point of supporting the schism. His time in France provided an opportunity for his talents as a linguist, historian, writer and theologian to be revealed, more so than had been appreciated during his life in England.

He died in 1992 and is buried in his adopted land. Originally published in French, his autobiography, "Prêtre rejeté", was subsequently translated with its foreword being written by Horatio Conington, son of his former housekeeper.

1969 – 1973 Fr Ronald Bustin

It would have been difficult for anyone to have followed the Houghton years with the factions engendered in the wake of Vatican II.

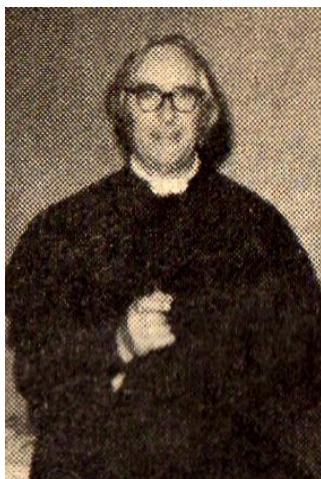


In 1971 upon establishment of the comprehensive education system, the Convent school became St Louis Middle School with St Edmund's joining St Alban's to be the feeder primary schools and St Benedict's becoming the upper school. Fr Bustin inherited a thriving Catholic population of 3,000 comprising 1061 Mass attendees.

Plans to provide a Catholic Church on the Mildenhall Estate alongside Prince Charles Avenue and Derwent Road failed to materialise and the proposals were ridiculed in the Bury Free Press of 3 September 1971 as 'The Milking Parlour Church' (see picture alongside).

Fr Bustin's assistants were Frs Stephen Kealey and subsequently Tom Kenny. The Sisters of St Louis also did much to contribute to the moral and religious life of the Parish, creating a framework for parents and children to follow. Mass attendance at the Convent Chapel attracted a dedicated number of parishioners who were able to worship in an atmosphere of tranquillity. Their work among the wider community saw them active in visits to the sick.

The Bishop transferred Fr Bustin to another parish after four years.

1973 – 1977 Fr Gerard Langley

His firm but patient ways charmed the parishioners and helped people to settle into the new liturgy and regain a sense of unity.

In 1973 the Church bulletin recorded: *'By fire (69), theft (70) and natural breakage (72) we now have no decent candlesticks'*. The invitation to donate replacements was met by unknown donors and during that year four new candlesticks were provided.

Fr Langley (picture courtesy of Pace Monthly 1975) is remembered for being a bit of a technician who left dismantled items about the presbytery. Mass was televised on 10 August 1975 and a recording made. The following year St Louis Middle School was granted Voluntary Aided status. During his tenure, he was assisted by Frs Tom Kenny and James

Smith.

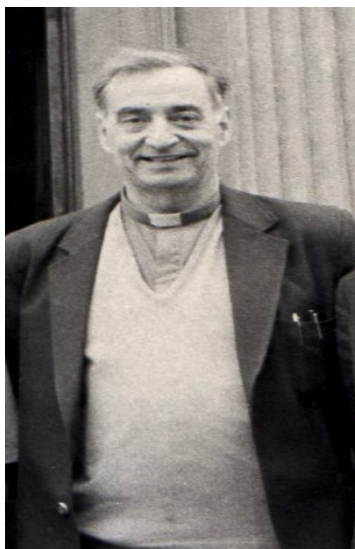
East Anglia was constituted as a new diocese on 13th March 1976. Our patrons were Our Lady of Walsingham, St. Felix, first Bishop of the East Angles, and St Edmund, King and Martyr. Bishop Alan Clark was the first to take charge of the diocese and St John's Church in Norwich became our Cathedral.

Like his predecessor Fr Langley also left after four years.

1977 – 1982 Fr Harry Wace

Educated by the Benedictines at Ampleforth where his brother was a monk, Fr Wace was well versed in theology and did not neglect to voice this in his sermons. Forward-looking, he fully accepted the modern teaching of the Church. He was also enthusiastic for house masses and prayer groups for which there were plenty of hosts within the parish. One of his ancestors had been a high ranking and famous Anglican clergyman, which made him welcome at the Anglican cathedral. During his time the vicar of St Mary's gave permission for our Bishop to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation there to accommodate the large number of candidates and their families. What a contrast with earlier times when a Protestant legacy had paid St Mary's vicar to preach anti-Catholic sermons.

Thanks to Fr Wace (picture courtesy of East Anglian Daily Times 2 August 1978) and his curate Fr McNally, what is now known as the Blessed Sacrament Chapel was restored and again used for the celebration of Mass. The Church was re-decorated and Fr Wace also insisted that a side entrance to the Church should be opened to enable disabled folk to come and go and funds for a ramp were supported by a sponsored cycle ride by a parishioner Philip Pitcher. Fr Wace and his predecessor certainly put our parish on an even keel. The Bishop thought him just the man to become the Administrator of the Cathedral. Other priests of this era were Frs Arthur Speight, Gerard Quigley Gerard Cawthorne, John McNally and Peter Leeming.

1982 – 1987 Fr Richard Wilson

He came to us from his parish in Ipswich having earlier served in Cambridge. Older parishioners describe him as a compassionate and wise man with a keen sense of humour though able to deliver fiery sermons. He took part in the charity bike ride in aid of historic churches. Fr Wilson started the parish council at the end of 1985, setting up sub-committees to coordinate adult religious education, ecumenism, liturgy and worship, finance, social activities and welfare.

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd established themselves at Wolfe Hall, Barrow, their work being dedicated to the needs of women. Records indicate their presence between 1982 and 1985.

During this time Sunday Masses included a service in the Anglican Church of St George on Mildenhall Estate.

By 1983 the Catholic population had reached 3,350 of whom 1,066 attended Mass. In that year there were 44 baptisms, 5 marriages and 21 conversions.

Fr Wilson was also responsible for creating a repository and library, turning the clock back to the days when books had been so important to the clergy and parishioners. Through donations and purchases from various sales the number of books ultimately rose to 637 and 319 audio tapes.

On 25 October 1987 Mass from St Edmund's was transmitted live by Anglia TV and networked across Britain, Northern Ireland and parts of Northern Europe.

Once again the Bishop wanted Fr Wilson's wise head to administer diocesan finances from his new parish in Costessy on the western edge of Norwich. He died in July 2010 at the age of 79 years.

He was supported at different times in his ministry by Frs Joseph Farrell, Richard Healey, Dermot Fenlon and Gerald Cawthorne. In 1986 Sr Helena Moss founded the St Louis Family Service (see Section 'E'). The year was also the 25th anniversary of Fr Peter Wilson's ordination, he being the grandson of Sir Pierce Lacy.

1987 – 1992 Fr John Drury

Though he had a soft Irish accent he had been raised in England before his studies in Ireland. He had received his own mother into the Church. At one time he worked among the poor in Peru and Bolivia. The warmth and eloquence of his first sermon won the congregation over while his approach to work, prayer and play went along with sympathetic tact. Upon the departure of his assistant, Fr Richard Healey, the Bishop sent a newly ordained curate Fr Paul Madison to help him – he had been an altar server at Fr Drury's former parish in Cambridge. Both were keen on ritual and music. Every Tuesday morning Mass was celebrated in St Edmund's School and sometimes ended with the children leaving Mass skipping to the music they had heard.



Fr John often celebrated Mass for villagers living outside the town with the consent of friendly Anglican vicars. He was also on visiting terms with the Methodist minister. The 150th anniversary of our Church was celebrated on 14 December 1987 with an ecumenical and civic service, televised in the autumn of that year in a programme with Fr Phillip Graystone commentating.

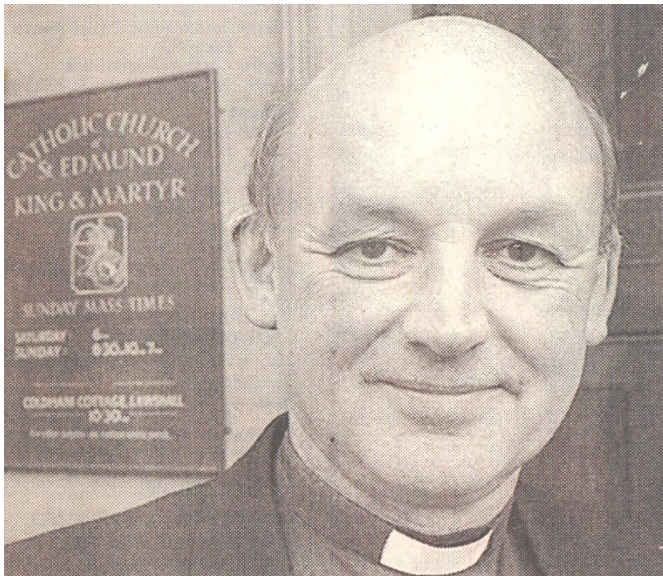
On 31 May 1989 a Mass of Thanksgiving for the Silver Jubilees of Frs John Drury and Dick Wilson was celebrated in our Church.

In his last year an arsonist burnt down part of St Edmund's school in a fire which also damaged the sacristy. The parish was also sad to lose Fr Madison when he became secretary to the Bishop. 1991 was the 200th anniversary of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. It was also the start of Faith 2000; initially the adult religious education programme ran from 26 November to 3 March but subsequently continued to the end of the decade. The Bishop appointed Fr Drury to be Administrator of the Cathedral in Norwich. This post was not to his liking and he soon returned to his former work in South America.

1992 – 1996 Fr Tom Murray

When our new parish priest arrived his induction in St Edmund's was packed with parishioners supplemented by two busloads of people from his former parish in Gorleston with several of the ladies in tears. His careful approach to the liturgy was slightly at odds with his taste for contemporary vestments.

Fr Jon Warrington, who had previously had a placement in the parish as deacon, came to assist Fr Murray in 1995. Also, during this era Fr Jonathan Salt came to the parish. Trained at Innsbruck, he was an accomplished musician able to play several instruments and at one performance in the Church he donned his lederhosen and waistcoat. Fr Murray was also assisted during his time by Frs Bernard Heath, Gerry Quigley and Bill Mason. Fr Murray left the priesthood after a short period; not long afterwards Fr Murray too left for another parish.

1996 – 2001 Fr John Barnes

A former Anglican Rector of the parish church in Walsingham, he later became Rector of a large abbey church in Wymondham. After his ordination as a priest he spent time in a temporary appointment with Fr Anthony Sketch in Lowestoft before coming to Bury again as a temporary priest. He would have learned something of his new parish as Fr Sketch was himself ordained on 17 June 1962 in Bury, the first since the Reformation. The warmth, kindness and mannerisms of Fr Barnes endeared him to his new flock to the point that some of them wrote to the

Bishop asking that he should remain in our parish. This entreaty worked and eventually he was confirmed as Parish Priest. He had previously written several books and was something of an artist, drawing line and wash pictures of old churches and buildings. But he too was posted away from his beloved Bury, this time to Dereham. Other priests during his time were Frs Bill Mason, Brendan Moffatt and Edmund Eggleston. Lawshall was served by Fr Gerry Quigley who resided in Bury.



Fr John Barnes pictured with Altar Servers on the feast of St Stephen 26 December 1998