

Brief History of the Catholic Faith in Irlam and Cadishead

After the reformation during the reign of Henry VIII (1491-1547) Catholics were bitterly persecuted and most would follow their faith in secret so it is difficult to find any accurate information about Catholics in this area until late in the 18th century.

During this time Irlam and Cadishead was mainly a farming community with Gentlemen farmers owning most of the land. If of the Catholic religion one option was to employ a land agent, who was a priest who would visit his people serving them in secret.

A great number of Catholics stood firm in their beliefs and became greatly impoverished, their estates gradually diminishing on account of fines imposed on them, the Massey's of Rixton was one family that suffered greatly losing a lot of land and money to the state.

By the nineteenth century people were able to follow their faith openly people from Irlam would travel to All Saints Church in Barton, whilst people from Cadishead would attend St Michael's Church in Rixton.

It was in 1870 that the first Catholic Church was built in Irlam. Canon Kershaw of Barton –upon-Irwell purchased a plot of land at the corner of Ashley Road and Liverpool Road on which a small chapel was built. This was served from Barton by the assistant priests of All Saints. It was called St Patrick's it served as a chapel until 1903.

In 1900 Miss Belinda de Trafford died leaving a bequest of £2,500 for the erection of a church at Irlam. The building of a new church started in September 1902 and was opened in 1903 and dedicated to Saint Teresa. St Patrick's chapel was then used as a day school.

In June 1968 a meeting was held to consider the question of the main entrance to the Church as it faced onto the main road. It was decided for the safety of parishioners and also to relieve congestion on Liverpool Road to re-site the main entrance from Liverpool Road to Astley Road. The alterations were carried out together with the redecoration of the Church which cost more than the £2,350 which the building contractor charged for building the Church.

By the early 1950's it was evident that St Teresa's was becoming inadequate for the growing number of parishioners and it was decided to build a new Church in Cadishead. A plot of land was purchased in Lords Street, building commencing in 1961. The new Church was completed in 1962 costing £30,000 and consecrated by the Bishop of Salford and dedicated to the Sacred Heart. The Church has a life sized crucifix on the wall above the altar that was especially sculpted for the Church by the Italian artist Ferdinand Sleulfesser.

With the number of residents increasing with the building of a large housing estate in Higher Irlam, the need for a new Church in the neighbourhood became a matter of some urgency and it was decided to build a new Church on Cutnook Lane.

Before the Church was built, Higher Irlam had been constituted as a separate Parish and during the period of construction Services were held in the Higher Irlam Co-op Hall. The new Church opened in 1968 and was called St Joseph the Worker.

By Debbie Yates