

The New Church

The architects were D C Goldie and Partners of Westminster and the contract for the building was awarded to E Turner and Sons of Havelock Place, Grangetown, who promised to employ as much local labour as possible. However, the next four years were to prove to be a nightmare for parishioners and builders alike.

Many will have observed that the Church does not in fact face East /West as is customary. The story was that the shape of the land left after the building of the Presbytery was not suitable for a new building to take on an East/West orientation. It is said that permission was given from Rome to build on a different axis, more North / South.

Turners appointed a parishioner, Mr George Barnett (father of Mrs Mary McAleavy) as their general foreman at the new Church site. He lived in Llanmaes Strees, just two doors away and was able to pass on much information about the building, especially the problems the builders experienced in reaching a 'solid bottom' on which to lay the foundations.

As they dug deeper through the mud, they came across skeletons of fish and crabs, which show that at some time in the past, sea water (probably tidal water) covered the ground.

Meanwhile, next to the site of the old Church and School another new building was taking shape. Funds were raised from the Parish to build a Memorial Hall in memory of the men of the Parish who died in the War 1914-1918. The St Patrick's Memorial Hall was opened in 1921. There was no land available at the time for this Hall to be built nearer to the new Church.

In 1928, Mgr Irvine was transferred, and Canon F H Garret became the Parish Priest. His Grace the Archbishop Dr Francis Mostyn gave Canon Garrett the immediate task of completing the building of the new Church.

From the outset Canon Garrett realised that the design envisaged by Mgr Irvine was far beyond the financial capability of the parishioners and he asked Mr Goldie to amend his original design and produce a less costly scheme. Whilst the basic Romanesque style of the Church remained unchanged, the ornate porch planned for the corner of the Church where the statue of St Patrick now stands was removed from the scheme altogether. The original plain end wall with a side porchway giving on to a paved courtyard, where the Church gardens are now laid out were also scrapped.

By the end of 1928 the foundations and footings were well advanced, although the extra cost of having to excavate so deeply was causing some concern to both the Architect and Canon Garret, as correspondence between them at the time showed. The foundations beneath the area where the piety stall is now sited were exceptionally deep. These were

to support a bell tower, originally planned, but sadly not built because of the extra costs.

Matters were made worse as Britain moved ever more deeply into the Depression, and unemployment rose rapidly which had an adverse effect on Parish income and its ability to finance the building costs.

The foundation stone which is on the left just outside of the front door of the Church was laid by Dr Dennis Cantillon in the presence of Archbishop Mostyn and about 4000 men from all the Catholic Parishes of Cardiff and a great concourse of people, on the Feast Day of St Patrick, March 17th 1929.

From then on work proceeded very quickly and exactly one year later on St Patrick's Day 1930, the new Church opened.



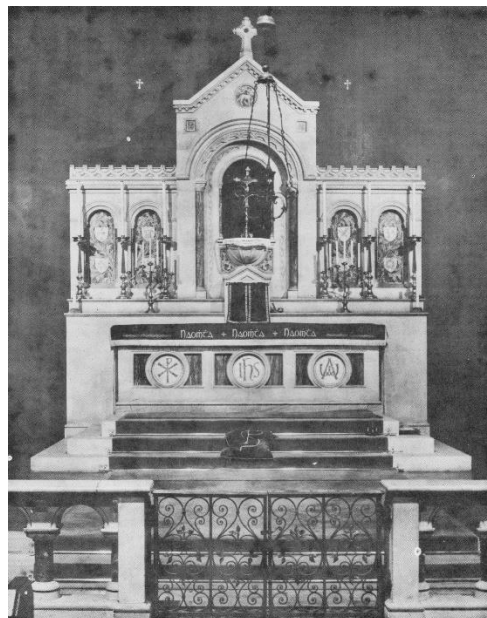


The total cost of the building excluding that of the High Altar , Communion Rails and Pulpit was £11,800 and there was accommodation for 750 people. The High Altar, Communion Rails and Pulpit were donated by the Cantillon Family to whom they are a memorial.

The Western Mail of Tuesday March 18th 1930 reporting on the opening ceremony of the previous day said that “The style has been kept as simple and as free from ornament as possible, but there is scope for future decoration.”

Indeed, there was scope for future decoration, but the extra cost of the foundations and a short-fall of money generally had caused the Parish Priest, Canon Garrett, to remove almost every item of decoration from the final scheme including the provision of side-altars. Both the Sacred Heart Altar and Our Lady’s Altar were brought from the old Church and even the organ was a second- hand one, brought from a private house in Dinas Powis. Some parishioners may remember the hand-painted flowers on some of the organ pipes and the sound of the bellows as the instrument was being played.

Many items were brought from the old Church that are still in use today: the stools and chairs on the altar, the Sacred Heart Statue and the original Statue of Our Lady as well as many vestments, candle sticks and altar cloths



In a very sad letter to Canon Garrett from the architect, Mr Downie explained that the removal of the bell tower from the plans would not bring about the savings that the Canon had hoped for because most of the cost was in the foundations which were already in place.

Other parishioners generously donated money to purchase various items: the Sanctuary Lamp which hung from the central arch over the main altar, was one such item. This has now been re-sited to the left hand side of the Sanctuary.

However, many of the Parishioners were of the view that the beauty of the new Church lay in its very simplicity and lack of ornamentation, and focused attention on the magnificent High Altar.

We look at this Altar every time we come into Church, but do we see what is there? It is constructed of Portland Stone and Marble. The back panels on either side of the Tabernacle contain eight mosaics showing images from the final hours of Jesus' life before the Crucifixion. Look closely, there are dice on the pockets of the garment.

The large golden Tabernacle that we see today was not the one that graced the centre of the High Altar in the 1930s. However, if you look closely the original outline of the top can still be seen. This was more in the shape of a house with a square golden door covered with a curtain.

The carpet on the Sanctuary was dark green and the walls were blue with small gold crosses at intervals. On either side of the Main Altar were small niches.

On the wall to the left of the Sanctuary hangs a very large oil painting. It was probably purchased to hang in the new Church, but there is very little documentation regarding this.

The Pulpit was very impressive. Its platform held up with stone and marble columns contained three mosaics. To the front, a large mosaic containing the monogram IHS

(this is another name for Jesus). The side mosaics were representations of the Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke and John: the writers of the four Gospels which were proclaimed from the pulpit.

The altar rails too which were made of Portland stone arches topped with marble slabs can be still seen as they were built, across the side altars. The rails across the Main Altar were removed during the 1970's but, a glimpse of their glory can be seen as they form part of the new free-standing Altar in the centre.

Dr Cantillon's generosity to St Patrick's Church did not end with his death. In his will he provided a small income to the Parish which went on for some years. Also a ciborium was donated by his family and this is still in use today.

At the opening of the new Church the estimated number of Parishioners was 4,000 and there were three resident priests and four Masses each Sunday.