

**OUR LADY SAINT MATTHEW  
&  
SAINT MARGARET**

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## OUR LADY OF CONSOLATION – BONNYRIGG



### *What's in a name?*

There is evidence to show that, towards the end of the Middle Ages, Scotland received a number of Devotions to Our Lady from Italy and Rome. The people who brought these Devotional practices into Scotland were pilgrims, or ecclesiastics who had resided in some official capacity, at a Roman Curia. One can discern an extremely clear example of such devotional infiltration in the career of Robert Blacader, who was Archbishop of Glasgow from 1483 to 1508.

In the mid-15th century, in Rome, there existed a painting of the Madonna by a little known artist named Antonazzo. This painting was in the wall of a portico in a granary belonging to the Mattei family near the Campadoglio. Sometime shortly before 1470, this picture of the Madonna came into prominence. It was said that a woman, whose son was about to be put to death for a crime of which he was innocent, knelt in prayer - anguished prayer - before this picture and the Madonna spoke to her and did console her with assurance that her son would be saved from the gallows. News of the miracles spread through the city and the picture, now called Our Lady of Consolation - became famous. People flocked to pray before the picture, miracles were attributed to the Madonna of the Consolation; a Confraternity was formed and entrusted with the care of the picture, and popular piety built a Church to enshrine it. That was in 1470.

During this time, when the enthusiasm for the Madonna of the Consolation was in its first fervour, the future archbishop of Glasgow, Robert Blacader, was in Rome. He is referred to as the Scots King's "messenger" in the letter of Pope Paul II to King James III, dated 11 April 1471. Later, between 1476 and 1478, Fr Blacader acquired the Church of Lasswade in 1476 and soon his devotion to the Madonna of the Consolation became manifest, for on 11 March 1477-78, Pope Sixtus IV granted a petition, submitted by Blacader, and issued a Bull of Foundation for Pilgrims, Sick Folk and Poor People as needed care ..... and the Pope decreed that the

hospital should be dedicated, as the petitioner, Fr Blacader, had requested, to our Lady of Consolation.

This is the earliest appearance of any dedication to Our Lady of Consolation in Scotland, and there seems little doubt that it is entirely due to the personal devotion of Robert Blacader.

This is the background to the title of our church in Bonnyrigg.

## **Looking Back**

At one time, Bonnyrigg parish was geographically split in two with half of the residents being registered in St. Matthew's at Rosewell and the other half in St David's, Dalkeith, although most apparently attended Mass at Nazareth House. The children therefore attended St. Matthew's or St David's schools at that time. With public transport limited, parishioners often walked the back road to St. Matthew's for Mass.

In the late 1940's, the parishioners asked the Diocese to build a church in Bonnyrigg. However, as this was just after the war, it was deemed more important to build housing so they were told a church would have to wait. After all, people make a church, not a building. Then in the 1950's there was an influx of Catholics to Bonnyrigg from the West of Scotland, as people came through to work in the coal mines.

It was at this time that Fr. McArdle was appointed to form a church in the area and he moved into a house in Park Road which had been donated to the parish of Bonnyrigg. He had a German housekeeper who was reputedly a very formidable lady to get past! Fr. McArdle started a building fund for a church, but at this time parishioners were allowed to go to Mass in the old Royal Picture House in Bonnyrigg. All sorts of events were organised by the men and women of the parish in order to raise funds, raffles, whist drives (no Bingo then!), hostess parties, and of course, weekly household collections of cash. It is thanks to all their efforts we have a church today.

It was a wonderful day when Archbishop Gordon Gray officially opened our lady of Consolation in 1957. Priests appointed following Fr. McArdle's time were Fr. Gallagher, Fr. Carey, Fr. Hendry and Fr. McMahon. Monsignor Hyland was also a frequent visitor to the parish, helping out in a variety of ways. Fr. Gallagher was instrumental in bringing a Catholic school to Bonnyrigg, as he was an influential figure on the Education Committee, and Bonnyrigg Primary School became St. Mary's. People felt Fr. Gallagher had a sixth sense in knowing when someone felt down. He always had a comforting word for them, even if it was at Communion during mass.

In July 1967 a Silver Jubilee Concert was staged by the children of St. Mary's School at Lasswade High School. The event was followed by a social evening in the Masonic Hall.

In 1990, it was necessary to combine the parishes of Bonnyrigg and Rosewell into Our lady of consolation and St. Matthew. A great debt of gratitude is due to Canon White for his efforts in achieving this so successfully.

### *Memories*

Anna Rose recalls when dances were held in the church. She says, "There was no licensed bar in those days, so the men often went over to the Staiside for a drink. St Patrick's Night dances were popular, but after Fr. Gallagher arrived and statues were put into the church, the dances stopped, perhaps due the fact there was no bar and perhaps the feeling that it was disrespectful."

There were Sunday house to house collections by Naish Gavin, Tim Canon, Mick Jones, James Scott and Hughie Jack among others. Anna remembers Mick called to collect 2/6d but everyone gave what they could afford. Contributions rose around the time of the store "divi", when parishioners had a little more cash to spare. The collections lasted until Fr. Gallagher arrived in the parish.

St. Mary's School, with headmaster Mr. Carney, also helped raise funds through fetes and sales of work, and a young Women's Guild was formed to build up a sense of community, with Beetle and Whist Drives held and a St. Vincent de Paul Society was also formed.

Some time after the church opened, Anna recalls a flood under the church and the men of the parish had to attend with picks and shovels in hand, go under the church and help to pump out water and make repairs to the foundations.

Naish Gavin well remembers attending mass in the Picture house, where the congregation were asked to raise their hands if they wished to take Communion. And the day the Foundation Stone was laid it was pouring with rain! Lots of events seem to be associated with heavy rainfall, a trait that continues to this day. Naish also recalls badminton being played in the church the seats being put back against the walls. The church cost £29,000 to build, which takes Naish back to the collections Anna remembered. He recalled, "The highlight of these has to be the day I was bitten Mrs Paton's dog, but undeterred, I was back there the following week for the 2/-!"

Eddie Hegarty's favourite recollection is of the day he and others were erecting the fence around the church. In the process of mixing cement, he took a pail, conveniently already containing water, from the vestry. Some time later, Fr. Gallagher was to be heard enquiring, "Where has the Holy Water gone?" The fence truly is blessed!

# THE PARISH OF ST MATTHEW – ROSEWELL



The Church of St Matthew celebrated its Centenary in 1989. Although the parish was small in number, its people have proved strong in faith for over a hundred years.

Before 1882, the Catholic population of Rosewell was served from St. David's, Dalkeith. When in 1882 the Parish of the Sacred Heart, Penicuik was established from St David's, Rosewell became part of the new parish. At this time the population of Rosewell was largely Catholic, most of the people were of Irish descent or had come directly from Ireland to work on the land or in the local coal mines.

The Catholic Directory of 1889 recorded that a chapel was in the process of building in Rosewell. This chapel (the present St. Matthew Primary School) was opened on 3rd February 1889 during the Archbishopric of William Smith; the parish continued to be served from Penicuik. Five years later, through efforts of the people themselves, an extension to the chapel was built to provide education for the Catholic children of the village. The school opened its doors for the first time on 24th September 1894.

St. Matthews continued to be served from the Sacred Heart Parish until the present Church was built under the auspices of Father Dominic Woods in 1923. The foundation stone was laid by Auxiliary Bishop Henry Graham in 1922 and the new Church formally opened in 1923. The people of Rosewell had at last a priest of their own with the appointment of Father Woods as the first Parish Priest.

The church is built and furnished in local brick and was constructed and paid for by the people of Rosewell. It is not difficult to imagine the effort and sacrifice which the building of St. Matthew must have entailed at a time of depression and deprivation. The parishioners of today have reason to be proud of and grateful to their forebears who have left such a beautiful building in which to worship God and have handed down through succeeding generations a legacy of faith which has proved to be strong and enduring.

## ST MARGARET'S CHURCH – GOREBRIDGE



Most of the land on which the Church of St. Margaret's now stands, was donated to the diocese in 1894 by James Cumming Dewar of Vogrie, a captain in the British Army (11th Hussars). It was donated so that a church, presbytery, school and any other buildings connected with the Church, could be built. The remainder of the land - that nearest the entrance - was bought by the diocese in 1923.

In 1893, Archbishop Angus MacDonald wrote out in his own hand a 'List of Catholics in Gorebridge and Neighbourhood', there being a total of 146 adults and 70 children at school.

Though the land was donated in 1894, it was not until 1904 that the Church was built. On 26 March 1900, Dewar of Vogrie complained to the Archbishop that so little progress had been made towards building the Church, and said that if he (Dewar) had also provided money for the church, it would certainly have been built by now. Dewar also points out that he has had 'numerous applications' to sell the land adjoining that set aside for the Church, but so far he has resisted the temptation because "I did not wish any buildings erected that might inconvenience or destroy the symmetry of the Church". That part of the land nearest the present entrance to the driveway, running alongside Lady Brae, was in fact sold by Cumming of Dewar to another party. There appear to be plans for building a house beside the entrance. It seems also that another Army officer, Lord Ralph Kerr of Woodburn, son of the Marquess of Lothian, was also pressing for the building of a church at Gorebridge. However, the continuing delay might have something to do with the fact that the Archbishop, Angus MacDonald, died on 29th April 1900. There was also evident confusion about the size of the building required.

The Parish Priest of St. Margaret's, Loanhead, Frederick Hoban, had been charged with organising a contract for the building of the Church in 1896. It was put out to competition, and on 6th May 1898, Hoban wrote to the Archbishop indicating that, on receipt of instructions from the diocesan finance committee, Messrs Buchanan and Bennett had been awarded the contract. This firm had already carried out work on St. Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh. But, on 12 May 1898, Hoban wrote again to the Archbishop:

*My Lord Archbishop, In looking over my letters relating to Gorebridge proposed Church I find that there is a material discrepancy between the seating accommodation specified in the competition as necessary to be provided and that stated by your Grace in your letter of 6th May. In my letter to the architects in November 1896, of which I enclose a copy, and which was dictated to me by Monsignor Grady, I state "that the committee desire me to ask you along with the other architects to submit competitive plans for a part of a church (say the nave) that would accommodate two hundred persons".*

*It is true that in Monsignor Grady's first letter of instruction to me of date 3rd October 1896, he stipulated that the building should afford accommodation for three hundred persons, but on the day after, I had another note from the Vicar General to say that "the seating room to be provided in the new portion of chapel at Gorebridge is to be 150. Accordingly in the first rough draft of my letter to the architects I inserted the number 150, but on presenting said draft to Monsignor Grady for revision he told me that in view of the census of population which he had received, he thought I should insert the number 200, which I accordingly did. If the number now to be provided is 300, your grace will see that the conditions of competition are very materially altered, and the extended accommodation cannot reasonably be expected for the same sum of £700.*

It is to be suspected that the need for more money for a larger church also contributed to the delay. It was not until 14 February 1904 that the Church was formally opened by Archbishop Smith. Mass was celebrated by Father Head, S.J., of Dalkeith, and after Mass a discourse was delivered by Father Robert Power, S.J., of Edinburgh. The choir of St. Mary's, Pathead, under the conductorship of Fr Jerrard, S.J., sang Barrett's Mass. At 4pm, there was Benediction in the Church. It had been planned to have a service outside; but the weather proved to be inclement. The Archbishop and the Priests were entertained to dinner by Captain Dewar of Vogrie. In 1923, the Archdiocese purchased the remainder of the land adjoining the driveway from Mrs Lillias Jessie Shirra-Gibb.