

‘PETER’S PEOPLE’

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INTRODUCTION

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The most southerly parish in the Diocese, St. Peter's boasts a neo-Byzantine church that provides a striking contrast with the mediaeval St. Lawrence's as one travels down the A49 from Shrewsbury. In common with every other parish, St. Peter's looks to the Bishop of Shrewsbury as the father of the diocesan family and to the support services of the Diocese. Throughout its history, however, it has profited from fruitful contacts with the neighbouring Archdioceses of Cardiff and Birmingham, especially with St. Ethelburga's, Leominster. Nowadays, it plays a significant part in the wider Christian fellowship in Ludlow. Indeed, well before Vatican II, Fr. Wilfrid Kelly caused some eyebrows to be raised when he invited a dozen non-Catholic clergy to officiate at Matins. Hence, it would come as no surprise to find the Parish Priest of St. Peter's in its centenary year saying one of the Church's Offices in a Nonconformist chapel or Anglican or Methodist ministers leading the congregation in Stations of the Cross. Ever since 1981, the St. Vincent de Paul Society has been active in the local community, with its ever-increasing aged population, making on average 750 visits a year. For more than a decade now, the Parish Centre has catered for the social life of St. Peter's but it has also opened its doors to all denominations and to an impressive range of organizations, thereby enhancing the quality of life for many living in the neighbourhood.

As the roots of the Parish have spread outwards, so they have gone deep. Even now, pre-Reformation links with St. Peter exist in Ludlow. In the Castle, a chapel founded in 1328 by Roger Mortimer was dedicated to that saint. It eventually became the courthouse for the Council of the Marches. Armed with his keys, the apostle also survives amongst the carved wooden choir stalls of the imposing Parish Church, together with an intensely moving pietà. Then there is our early sixteenth century chasuble said to have been embroidered by the ill-fated wife of Henry VIII, Catherine of Aragon, who lived in Ludlow for about five months. Finally, there is the enigma behind the magnificent monument to Sir Robert Townsend, Lord Chief Justice of Chester, which can be found in the sanctuary of the Anglican St. Lawrence's. This was erected twenty-four years after his death in 1556, although his family had never renounced their allegiance to Rome and, indeed, in 1603 were suspected of harbouring Jesuits. Such anomalies apart, as elsewhere, as the Reformation progressed, Catholic worship, in particular, the celebration of Holy Mass, was confined to those houses equipped with hiding places for the resident or visiting priest. Until the 1829 Act of Emancipation, families such as the Blounts of Mawley Hall near Cleobury Mortimer kept the Old Faith alive. Even afterwards, the most natural reaction of Catholics in South Shropshire, when it came to practising their religion, was to walk or ride to the nearest safe haven out in the countryside.

From the mid nineteenth century, however, a Mass Centre was established in Ludlow itself, a room rented from a Mrs. Tillett in Old Street. This was served from Mawley Hall and Plowden Hall and, occasionally, from Leominster. In the latter instance, the priest gave up after several months as attendance was so low. Far more dauntless was Fr. Laurence Levett who, from May 1896, travelled on alternate Sundays the thirty miles from Shrewsbury to pave the way for a new parish. Whether trains ran on Sunday or not, he was close to eighty at the time. Equally dynamic was Fr. Charles Fisher. He became the first resident Parish Priest in 1907, with a congregation of 47, and immediately set to work to build a small church in Julian Road, in the gardens of two houses given to St. Peter's by Miss Davis of Elm Lodge. This 'temporary' church

was opened on January 26th 1908 by the Right Reverend Francis Mostyn, Bishop of Menevia, because the Bishop of Shrewsbury was in declining health. It continued in use until 1936 when the present church was erected on Henley Road. For many years thereafter, it gave yeoman service as a parish hall before being converted for other uses. It has only recently been closed.

For just over 25 years, the Parish had put money by for a permanent church when, in 1934, a donation of £6,000 by Mrs. Isobel Brown, formerly of Gravel Hill and Ludford House, enabled land to be bought for the purpose on Henley Road. Work began in 1935, the foundation stone being laid and blessed on May 9th. What sprang up was the brain child of Signor Dr. Giuseppe Rinvoluceri of Conway. It was a Romanesque structure, its dome signifying heaven and earth united in praising God. Despite its exotic provenance, most of the work was executed by local craftsmen while its grey stone was extracted from Farlow Quarry, Clee Hill, in a bid to match that used when Ludlow Castle was built. At an eventual cost of £35,000, it was consecrated by Bishop Ambrose Moriarty on July 2nd, 1936.

Over the past hundred years, the Catholic population in Ludlow has increased tenfold, numbers in particular having been swollen during World War II by children evacuated from Liverpool and other high-risk areas, by British and American servicemen stationed nearby and by sizeable contingents of German, Italian and Ukrainian POWs. During the incumbency of Fr. Peter Pears, the POWs made a considerable contribution to the musical life of the Parish. Later, St. Peter's was in dire financial straits, so much so that Fr. Albert Roberts, was not able to afford oil for the boiler. Closure, therefore, seemed inevitable when Fr. Michael English was appointed in 1961. Contrary to expectations, however, he did not deliver the coup de grace but set about giving the Parish the kiss of life so that, after a few years, it was in a sound financial position.

At this time, too, the sister church of St. Elizabeth's was built in Cleobury Mortimer, following the death of the last member of the Blount family of Mawley Hall. Since then, Parish Priests have braved Clee Hill in all weathers to serve both churches. It has always been taken for granted that the two congregations should see a great deal of each other. St. Peter's also benefited tremendously from the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, who resided within the Parish from 1991 to 2004. As the years have gone by, the laity has become increasingly involved in the liturgy and in the running of the Parish, the latest challenge being the creation of the Local Pastoral Area. There have already been some productive encounters with St. Milburga's and St. Walburga's.

SECTION I

The Catherine of Aragon Chasuble (Immediate sources: Story of Our Parish 2005 & subsequent versions; Matt Doyle blog 'Royal Regalia')

When Sir Walter Blount of Mawley Hall died in 1958, he bequeathed to Cleobury Mortimer parish an early chasuble. The vestment in question has been dated by the Victoria & Albert Museum as early sixteenth century. Catherine, for about five months in 1501, lived in Ludlow Castle as the bride of Prince Arthur, heir to the throne of Henry VII. Prince Arthur died on April 2nd in the same year and, in due course, Catherine became the first wife of his younger brother, Henry VIII. Was the chasuble, though, as the Blount family believed, given directly by Catherine of Aragon to Elizabeth Blount, her Lady in Waiting?

Recent research, particularly by our former Parish Priest, Father Paul Sidoli, who in 1996 published his findings in a 3,700 word report, suggests that it was pieced together after Catherine's death in January 1536. In her will, Catherine asked that her gowns of velvet and cloth of gold held by the King should be made into church vestments. The cloth of gold used for the cross piece on the vestment was manufactured in Florence between 1470 and 1500 and was imported into Spain, after which it travelled with Catherine to England. Pomegranates feature prominently on the cross piece and these, it is claimed, were the ill-fated queen's personal emblem, together with the winged seraphim on wheels which with other devices adorn the velvet of which the rest of the garment is made. Other authorities, though, dispute that such symbols were exclusive to the woman whom Henry VIII divorced once he had broken with Rome.

What is uncontroversial is that the dying queen requested that their daughter, Mary, should inherit the furs from her garments. It is, therefore, probable that Mary also had these gowns made into ecclesiastical vestments, and may have added to her mother's embroidery, once she became reconciled with her father four months after Catherine of Aragon's death.

Whatever its provenance, since it was rescued from the dismantling of the Chapel at Mawley Hall, the chasuble has added distinction to celebrations at St. Mary's Harvington, St. Elizabeth's and at St. Peter's itself where, for example, it was worn at the Requiem Mass in 2006 at the age of 96 for Mrs. Monica Meek who had done so much to give it a new lease of life.

The Venerable William Davies: (Account abridged from Catholic Online)

He was one of the most illustrious of the priests who suffered under Queen Elizabeth. He was probably born in Denbighshire and died at Beaumaris on July 27th, 1593. He studied at Rheims and was ordained priest in April 1585. His mission took him to Wales. In March 1592, he was arrested at Holyhead with four students whom he was sending via Ireland to the English College at Valladolid. Having frankly confessed that he was a priest, he was separated from his companions and thrown into a dungeon at Beaumaris Castle. After a month, his sanctity and patience gained him some relaxation of his close confinement and he was able to join the students for an hour a day and even to celebrate Mass. By degrees the jailer became so indulgent that they might have escaped, had they so willed. His fame for piety and wisdom brought Catholics from all parts to consult him while Protestant ministers came to dispute with him. At the assizes he and his companions were condemned to death, on which the martyr intoned the 'Te Deum', which the others took up. The injustice of the sentence was so apparent that to still the people's murmurs the judge reprieved the condemned until the Queen's pleasure be known. Sent to Ludlow, to be examined by the Council of the Marches, Father Davies foiled the artifices of his enemies who took him to the church under the pretext of a disputation, and then began the Protestant service. He at once began to recite the Latin Vespers in a louder voice than the ministers' and afterwards publicly exposed the trick. From Ludlow he was sent to Bewdley, where he shared a dungeon with felons, but eventually he was sent back to Beaumaris where he rejoined his young companions. For some six months he lived with them the life of a religious community, dividing the time between prayer and study, "with so much comfort to themselves that they seemed to be rather in heaven than in prison." At the summer assizes it was decided that the priest must die as a traitor, though he was offered his life if he would go but once to church. In spite of the open opposition of the people, who honoured him as a saint, he was hanged, drawn and quartered. As he put the rope round his neck, the martyr said: "Thy yoke, O Lord, is sweet and Thy burden is light." His companions, though condemned to imprisonment for life, managed in time to escape and the youngest found his way at last to Valladolid where he recounted the whole story.

The Blessed Edward Campion: (Sources: Catholic Online & Archdiocese of Southwark)

Gerard Edwards was born in 1552 at Ludlow, of a good family, and was educated for two years at Jesus College, Oxford. This would indicate that he had subscribed to the new religion since only those prepared to take the Oath of Supremacy could come down with a degree. He was afterwards in the service of Gregory Fiennes, eighth Baron Dacres, whose wife had strong Catholic leanings. He arrived at Rheims on February 22nd 1586, where he assumed the name of Campion in honour of Edmund Campion who had been martyred some years earlier. He was ordained sub-deacon at Laon on September 18th, deacon at Rheims on December 19th, and priest at the beginning of the following Lent, being described as of the Diocese of Canterbury. Sent on a mission, on March 18th 1587 he was arrested at Sittingbourne, and imprisoned in Newgate and at the Marshalsea. With him at Oaten Hill, Canterbury, were executed two priests, Robert Wilcox and Christopher Buxton, and a layman, Robert Widmerpool. Offered the chance of escape from the Marshalsea, he replied: "I would gladly escape if I did not hope to suffer martyrdom."

(Sources: Article by Henry.F.J.Vaughan in ‘Shropshire Parish Registers: Nonconformist & Roman Catholic Registers’ ed. W.P.W.Phillimore 1903 , Shropshire Parish Register Society, ‘Historical Notes on English Catholic Missions’ edited by Bernard W. Kelly in 1907 & reprinted by Michael Gandy in 1995, and Recusants Exchequer Roll, Michaelmas 1592, transcribed by the Catholic Record Society in 1915.)

Until Elizabeth gained the English throne, the Plowdens kept the quiet tenor of their way, but Edmund Plowden was far too brilliant a legal luminary to be hidden, and Elizabeth, a clever woman, was anxious to have men of superior mental ability in her service. She wrote an autograph letter to Edmund Plowden, offering him the Chancellorship of England if he would change his religion. His answer is still extant: “Hold me, dread Sovereign, excused. Your Majesty well knows I find no reason to swerve from the Catholic Faith in which you and I were brought up. I can never, therefore, countenance the persecution of its professors. I should not have in charge your Majesty’s conscience one week before I should incur your displeasure, if it be your Majesty’s Royal intent to continue the system of persecuting the retainers of the Catholic Faith.” Sergeant Plowden had been a Member of Parliament under Mary, and is said to have headed a body of members who seceded from the House after vainly opposing the persecution of Protestants in that reign... He was the author of the celebrated dictum, ‘No priest, no Mass’, which subsequently proved fatal to many a prosecution for recusancy.

The original fine for not attending the Church of England service prescribed by the Act of Uniformity was 12d. (5p.), on each occasion. By the time the Recusant Roll for 1592 was drawn up, this had risen to £20 a month, regardless of the status of the recusant. The largest accumulated debt recorded was incurred by Margaret Lawson of Stamfordham. She owed the treasury £2,680 for not having gone to the Parish Church between 1581 and 1592 and comparable amounts for other infringements of the law. The penalty, for example, for voluntarily hearing Mass was 100 marks (£65) and a year’s imprisonment.

In addition to such crippling financial penalties, the Catholic gentry were debarred from the two universities and from even relatively humble civic posts such as Justice of the Peace. They were also confined to within five miles of where they lived unless they had received express permission from the authorities to make a particular journey.

If the likes of the Plowdens found life almost intolerable under such conditions, imagine the plight of yeomen, tradesmen and tenant farmers earning, perhaps, a shilling (5p.) a day, if they were lucky. Here are some local examples of people who, in September 1592, were about to be prosecuted for non-payment.

William Davis of Cleobury Mortimer:	mason:	£280;
Edward Harte of the same town:	miller:	£280;
Matthew Lewis of Ludlow:	yeoman:	£160;
Arthur Blackmore of the same town:	yeoman:	£160;
Rudolph Tyler of the same town:	yeoman:	£160.

Even in the eighteenth century, Catholics were not immune to harassment, as the following account illustrates. One of the Plowden family, when at his seat of Aston le Walls in Oxfordshire, drove into a neighbouring town, having some fine, valuable horses in his carriage. One of the neighbouring gentry of Whig propensities, came up to the carriage and, offering £5 a piece for the horses, took them away, under an Act of Parliament which allowed that anyone seeing horses of the value of more than £5 in the possession of a Papist, might offer the £5 and take the horses. Mr. Plowden was so disgusted with this mean affront that he reduced his mansion to the state of a farmhouse and left Oxfordshire in contempt.

From about 1729, the chaplains at Plowden were mostly Jesuits. From 1784 to 1787, the Benedictines of Acton Burnell served the mission. During the incumbency of Fr. Richard Colgan (1827 – 1867), the present chapel and presbytery were built. The school was added in 1874. There is still a domestic chapel at the Hall, which contains several priests' hiding-places. Some ancient vestments are carefully preserved there, including a chalice-veil said to have belonged to the Blessed Thomas More.

Father Bernard Price, O.F.M. (Source: Letter from Fr. Justin McLoughlin O.F.M. dated July 24th 1976)

One-time Master of Novices at Douai and chaplain to the Franciscan nuns at Bruges, Father Bernard Price became a wandering friar on circuit who, in 1714, was reported to be in North Wales. Two years later, according to Fr. Antony Parkinson, Provincial of the Order of Friars Minor, Father Price 'resides for ye most part in Ludlow in Shropshire with ye widow Smith of Aston and a son and three daughters.' He died in 1731 as Titular Guardian of Bristol after 44 years as a Franciscan. Ludlow, therefore, was not entirely cut off from mainstream Catholicism in the eighteenth century.

Non Jurors in Ludlow (Source: English Catholic Non Jurors in 1715: Editors, Rev. Edgar E. Estcourt & John Orlebar Payne: Burns & Oates 1885; Ludlow 1085 – 1660 by Michael Faraday)

Among the faithful few in Ludlow that Father Bernard Price in all likelihood would have encountered were the following:

Elizabeth Smith, Juliana Smith, Mary Smith and Anne Smith, spinsters, of Barnaby House, a freehold in Mill Street;

Elizabeth Smith of Aston, spinster, daughter of Sir Edward Smyth of Acton Burnell, Baronet, deceased;

Joseph Phillips, gentleman, and his wife Catherine who had an estate at Ashford Bowdler. (*The former was perhaps a descendant of a clothier of the same surname who, in 1560, had declared himself too old to change his beliefs so that he wished 'to die in the Catholic Christian faith.'*);

James Wilcox, a stonecutter, who had a freehold house in the Parish of St. Laurence;

William Winter, tailor, and Susannah, his wife, who had a leasehold house in Ludlow.

Mawley Hall

(Sources: Article by Henry.F.J.Vaughan in 'Shropshire Parish Registers: Nonconformist & Roman Catholic Registers' ed. W.P.W.Phillimore 1903 , Shropshire Parish Register Society, and 'Historical Notes on English Catholic Missions' edited by Bernard W. Kelly in 1907 & reprinted by Michael Gandy in 1995.)

The Blounts remained steadfast to the old Faith and suffered accordingly, but in the later days, were able, when a Priest's life was moderately safe, to have their own Chaplain so that the Mission at Mawley was virtually a Chaplaincy. In former days, there was a chapel with a means of concealment and escape for the Priest constructed in the upper part of the mansion. For fear of persecution, it was commonly spoken of as 'the servants' hall'. However, on October 31st, 1776, a chapel was solemnly blessed by Bishop Thomas Talbot, one of the Shrewsbury family that continued to support the Faith. This chapel, dedicated to St. Mary, was enlarged in 1825 and 1850.

In 1961, a change of ownership resulted in the demolition of the old chapel, leading to the construction of St. Elizabeth's church in Cleobury Mortimer, which is served from St. Peter's.

Among the more interesting baptismal entries in the Parish register are the following:

1766. Irish traveller baptised June 1st, 1766, name forgot.
Godmother: Betty Creib?; Godfather: Joseph Mitchell (Stanton).

1766. In the year 1766, June 1st, I, John Manning, Pastor of Mawley, supplied the ceremonies on Elizabeth Blount, daughter of James & Isabella Blount, of Bouldon in Shropshire, but now of Cleobury Forge. She was born at Boulden and xtended by her own father, it being in casu necessitatis.

1767. Broome. John Broome, son of William and Mary Broome, living at Oretton under the Clee Hills, neither father nor mother then Catholics, was baptised on April 11th, and born on April 7th, 1767.
Godfather: Richard Edmonds; Godmother: Ann Deane.

1772. Botterall or Botheral. Mary Botheral, daughter of ----- Botherall and Elizabeth his wife, born Oct.1st 1772, and baptised on the same day by Mary Hall, being in danger of death, all the ceremonies supplied by me R(ichard) G(ibson) on October 2nd, 1772.

1795. Bates. Thomas Bates, son of Francis & Sarah Bates, Mamble, was born & baptd, July 9th, 1795. Godfr: John Smith; Godmr: Catherine Proberts.

* On the day of his birth, coals were first carried by water to Tenbury.

1811. Maguire. July 17th, 1811, I baptised an infant born at Ludlow, June 25th, in the year of our Lord 1810, whose name was James Joseph, of the legitimate marriage of John & Margaret Maguire, natives of the town of Wexford in Ireland, now resident at

Ludlow. Godfr: Joseph Santi; Godmr: Palma Nagni; both servants of Mr. Lucien Bonaparte. D(enis) Fortin.

1813. Bonaparte. In the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirteen, January the fifth, was baptized by me (*Denis Fortin*), Missionary of the congregation of Mawley, Louis Bonaparte, born yesterday, son of Lucien Bonaparte (*brother of Napoleon I*), born at Ajaccio in Corsica, French Senator, prisoner of war in England, residing at present at Thorngrove, Worcestershire, and of Mary Alexandrine Charlotte Louise Lawrence, of Bleschamps, born at Calais in France, his lawful wife. Godfather: Charles Jules Lawrence Lucien Bonaparte, brother of the infant; Godmother: Charlotte Bonaparte, sister of the same infant, born at St. Maximin, in Provence, France.

From the Diocesan Archives: Box 1

Plowden
January 14th 1884

The Ludlow Mission has been served for many years from Mawley. There is no church or chapel. I said Mass in the year 1876 in a private room but, in consequence of some of the Catholics leaving town, I had but one or two to attend, hence I was obliged to discontinue it. Fr. Kerin (now of Birmingham but formerly of Leominster) had Mass also in the same place but was obliged to discontinue it as scarcely any attended. In fact, those who wished for Mass wanted it on Sundays (*when, presumably, he was officiating at Plowden*). Mass has not been celebrated there since 1879. The House in which it was celebrated is no longer inhabited by the Catholic party who failed and had to leave town. Ludlow being nearer to Mawley was always served from that chaplaincy until Dr. Crowther, once Chaplain at Mawley, made some strange difficulties about attending it, hence, Dr Brown (*first Bishop of Shrewsbury from 1851 – 1881*) gave me that work. Ludlow is 11 miles from Mawley and 14 from Plowden. The Priests from Mawley who attended in my time were Dr. Green (1849 – 59), Frs. Molloy (1859 – 60), Power (1860 - 64), Lynch (1865 – 1871) and Dr. Crowther (1871 -75).

The Ludlow Mission has now only 6 Catholics. Of these, one family goes to Leominster on Sunday. Some of the others are indeed very indifferent and I could not get them to attend Mass when it was there.

Francis O'Neill (*Missionary Rector at Plowden: 1873 – 1887*)

From the Diocesan Archives: Box 1

Right Revd. and dear Lord Bishop,

I now humbly beg to forward to your Lordship a report of the State of the Mission at Ludlow. I went to Ludlow a week after your visit to Mawley, and I have gone regularly every week since. On my first arrival, I found everything connected with the Altar in tolerably good condition.

With regard to the people, there are some who cannot possibly attend Mass on a weekday on account of their occupations or infirmities. There are others who might attend but seem unwilling to do so. Some cannot on account of distance. There is a Family at Wooferton unable to come. Others again there are who I am sorry to say will neither make themselves known to the Priest nor to their fellow Catholics. These I can hear of but cannot meet with. There is a regular attendance at Mass of from 14 to 17 (children and adults). With regard to the Sacraments, I am sorry to say that I found the people in a sad state. Only two had been to their Easter duties and these two had gone to other places for this purpose. Some (I am speaking of those who have attended Mass regularly) who had made their first confession and communion had not been to Easter duties for three, four, five and up to seventeen years. None of the young people were being prepared for these Sacraments. Hence the ages of those who

have not made their first confession range from 9 to 29. I go early in the evening before the day on which I say Mass and I visit all the people. I have succeeded in getting all who have made their first communion to go to their Easter duties – with about one exception – and I am now endeavouring to get them to attend the Sacraments regularly. I also have those who have not made their first confession up for instructions for their first confession and communion each Monday evening. One poor old man died in the Workhouse shortly after I began to go to Ludlow and a few days after I had given him all the last Rites of the Church. The principal thing needed by the people is instruction. And hitherto I have been at a loss to know how to manage this, for I say Mass at 8 o' clock (this is as early as I can get them to come) and they have to hurry away to their various employments as soon as Mass is over.

With regard to expenses, when I first began to go I found two months' rent was due for the rooms (the rent is £2 a quarter). The collection which is made during Mass only covers about one quarter of the weekly expenses. The people give as generously as they are able but they cannot give much. Fortunately, hitherto Miss Davies has kindly enabled me to pay the rest. I wrote to Mr. Plowden and he kindly sent me a cheque for £2 but he also stated that he could not promise anything for the future. I have not received anything from any other source. I have written to Mr. Ward but I have not received any reply. I tell them that I am giving my services to Ludlow because I intend with your Lordship's permission to keep every penny I can save towards the establishment of a Mission there but I cannot afford to pay the expenses.

I cannot at this moment think of anything more to state to your Lordship

Begging your Lordship's prayers and blessing on the work, I beg to remain
Your very humble and obedient servant,
H(enr)y Gregson,

Mawley Hall, Cleobury Mortimer, Salop.

P.S.

A short time ago, when filling up the chalice for Mass, the cup came off. On this occasion, I said the Rosary and then addressed a few words to the people. I brought the broken chalice back with me and I have since been using one which I have borrowed from Lady Blount until this can be repaired. It is a new chalice but evidently got up cheap. I cannot find out where it was made. Perhaps your Lordship will kindly say what I am to do with it.

H(enr)y Gregson.

SECTION II

13

Priests Associated with St. Peter's Ludlow

1896 – 1905 Lawrence Locke Levett

Parish Priests

1907 – 1925 Charles Edward Fisher

1925 – 1938 Arthur Henry D'Arcy

1938 – 1941 Joseph Martin Briscoe

1941 – 1946 Peter Lancelot Pears

1946 – 1950 Ronald Joseph Pownall

1950 – 1954 Wilfrid Kelly

1954 – 1960 Albert Roberts

1961 – 1964 Michael Alexander English

1964 – 1967 Richard Dunphy

1968 – 1978 Francis McAlinden

1978 – 1989 Philip Wilson

1989 – 1998 Paul Sidoli

1998 - 2011 James Robinson

2011 - Christopher Walsh

Priests born in or around Ludlow

Charles Blaquhan Whitefoord. Son of Samuel Charles & Mary Whitefoord. Born in Whitton Paddocks on January 6th 1885. Educated at Rugby & Merton College, Oxford. Converted in 1910. Ordained in the Lateran in February 1915. Chaplain to the Forces, 1916 – 1918. Wounded by a shell on the Somme on May 29th 1918 and died the next day.

Bernard Ignatius Bell. Son of Francis & Catherine Bell (see Page x). Born in Ludlow on July 28th 1894. Educated at Cotton & Oscott. Ordained in Birkenhead in July 1920. Served in Runcorn, Birkenhead & Stockport. Vicar General of the Diocese between 1962 and 1964. Died on March 31st 1964.

Ivor John Kind. Son of William & Marion Amy Kind. Born in Ludlow on May 19th 1914. Educated at Cotton & Oscott. Ordained in Seacombe in June 1939. Served in the Wirral and in North Cheshire until 1981. Died on September 9th 1993. An excellent musician and organist.

Arrangements to cater for the spiritual needs of Catholics in and around Ludlow were put on a much firmer basis when, in May 1896, the elderly Father Lawrence Levett, who was attached to the Cathedral at Shrewsbury, started to serve Ludlow and Wem on alternate Sundays. The momentum soon gathered to capitalize on his ministry.

From the Diocesan Archives: Box 1

To the Very Revd. Samuel Webster Allen
(*future Bishop of Shrewsbury*)

16th November 1896

Very Revd and dear Canon,

Mrs. Jane Orford, aet 70, widow, now residing at (*No 2, Lower Galdeford*) Ludlow, Salop, by a will dated November 3rd 1896 has named you (after all legal claims have been discharged) as residuary legatee, with the understanding that the amount (*estimated at £150. The estate valued at £318.0.7 was later described as practically the life savings of a hawker*) actually realized by you to be applied to the requirements of the Catholic Mission at Ludlow towards, if possible, a permanent foundation. Lawrence Locke Levett, 18 Belmont, Shrewsbury.

From the Diocesan Archives: Box 1

6 & 7, High Street Ludlow
30th December, 1897

Dear Fr. Levett,

Sister Perina reached here safely last evening and I need not tell you how pleased we were to have a 'real live nun' in the place. She stayed with me last night as she was feeling very tired and entered upon her duties (*as nurse*) this morning. I took her to Mrs. Orford and while there Dr. Brook came and I introduced her and we heard what he had to say respecting Mrs. Orford. He does not think it probable that she will ever come downstairs again...

C. E. Bell (*Eventually, her husband, Francis Bell, was co-executor with Fr. Levett of Mrs. Orford's will. At this time, Mass was said in their home by Fr. Levett on alternate Sundays. According to a letter received by Fr. Paul Sidoli in January 1994, 'Mrs Bell and another lady used to recite the rosary together for the building of a church. It was thought...it was in Julian Road that they did this.'*)

From the Diocesan Archives: Box 1

Bishop's House, Shrewsbury
3rd March, 1898

Very dear Fr. Levett,

Many thanks for your kind service to Ludlow. The money shall be carefully husbanded for any future that may promise still better things for this pretty but benighted spot.

All faithfully yours in Christ,
S. W. Allen

Matters were coming to a head when Miss Davies of Elm Lodge investigated on behalf of the Diocese a run-down part of Ludlow, in all probability in or near Old Street. It proved to be a non-starter.

From the Diocesan Archives: Box 1

Elm Lodge,
Ludlow, Salop.
Christmas Day 1900

My dear Lord Bishop,

Mr. Ward (*the man who ignored Fr. Gregson's letter*) failed to come yesterday and I went to see the houses without him. It is worse than I thought. Even when the old cottages are cleared away, the houses which are not condemned are inhabited by such a very low class of people that I think it doubtful whether you would get the rest to move. The property is so disgracefully mean, I am sure you would be ashamed to possess it. I entreat you, my dear Lord Bishop, have nothing to do with Mr. Turford.

Believe me, your very obedient child,
C. M. Davies.

Then, by a Deed of Gift on May 22nd 1905, Miss Davies gave two houses at the corner of Gravel Hill and Julian Road to the Church with directives that one should be used to house the priest and the other to provide a small income for the new parish. A temporary church was to be built on the two gardens. Meanwhile, some feathers were being ruffled.

From the Diocesan Archives: Box 1

5 Old Street, Ludlow
3rd October 190-

Dear Sir,

I have received notice from Miss Caroline Davies on behalf of the Catholic Church to give up possession on 25th December, next, of the rooms they rent from me. I shall be very much obliged if you will kindly inform me if this notice has been given with the knowledge and sanction of the Bishop.

Yours faithfully,
H. Tillett.

From the Diocesan Archives: Box 1

Elm Lodge
Undated

My dear Lord Bishop,

Mrs. Tillett's note only means that we want to give the rooms up, and she wants to keep us. Since Fr. Levett died (*on 18th March, 1905, aged 77. He said Mass at Ludlow the Sunday before his death from acute gastritis and syncope*), she has been troublesome and interfering – very eager after the rent – but she objects to our using the rooms – so Fr. Rogers thought we had better leave quietly without having a row with her. We shall make better arrangements and the Mass will go on all the same.

I have received £4.17.6, the quarter's rent for 10 Gravel Hill and, with your kind permission, I want to use it for our present rent at 5 Old Street and, as far as it will go, to pay for Fr. Roger's expenses.

With many thanks for your kind blessing,
Your obedient child,
Caroline Mary Davies.

After this, there was some controversy over whether Miss Davies could withhold from the Bishop rent from property already given to the Church. A tenant was also causing problems.

From St. Peter's Register of Burials

The new public cemetery on Henley Road was blessed on November 21st 1905. Once he became Rector of St. Peter's, Father Fisher was granted permission by Ludlow Town Council to erect a wooden (originally, it was described as stone) cross in the portion of the cemetery allotted to the use of the Roman Catholic Church. The fee charged was £2.9.6d.

Via the Parish Office: St. Laurence's Parish Magazine No. 484 September 1907

Exposition on S. Matt. xvi 18 -19

Not until the Church had existed for some centuries did the Bishop of Rome make a claim to supremacy over all Churches everywhere, and that claim is vehemently urged now, and in our own country. The Bishops of Rome assert that what our Lord said to S. Peter gave them this supremacy through S. Peter whose successors they profess to be.

Now it is more than doubtful if S. Peter was ever at Rome at all, much less that he was Bishop of Rome. Even if he was Bishop there, that does not give them authority, as his successors, to make new doctrines, new articles of Faith, to add to the Faith, to corrupt the Truth, to teach other than Apostolic Doctrine; on the contrary, we are taught earnestly to contend for the Faith "once for all delivered to the Saints", therefore, to contend against Roman additions to and sectarian contractions of the Faith.

What then are some of the additions to the Faith which Rome teaches?

That prayer is to be made to the Blessed Virgin – that she is an Intercessor who can influence her Son, our Blessed Lord – though "there is but one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus. – *1 Timothy ii. 5.*

Again, Rome teaches that the Cup is to be withheld from the Laity in the Holy Communion; so they can only receive a mutilated Sacrament. How can they be sure of receiving the full grace of the Holy Sacrament when they receive only one of "the outward and visible signs, ordained by Christ Himself," as a means whereby we receive the inward and spiritual grace? But above all, our Blessed Lord's command, "Drink ye all of It" is for all time a protest against the denial of the Cup to any Christians, as also His words: "Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood ye have no life in you."

Further, the Bishop of Rome claims to be infallible, though S. Peter never claimed infallibility, but meekly bore S. Paul's rebuke at Antioch for an error he had committed through fear of man. Neither did he preside at the Council of Jerusalem, where S. James, as Bishop, pronounced the decision at which the Council had arrived.

That the early Church did not assert the infallibility of the Bishop of Rome is known by all students of Church History. Pope Vigilius was condemned by the fifth General Council at Constantinople, A.D. 553, and his name erased from the sacred diptychs. Six months after he submitted to the decrees of this Council. At the sixth General Council at Constantinople, A.D. 680, Pope Honorius was condemned for heresy. These cases are decisive against the modern notion of infallibility.

Time does not allow of our mentioning other false and unscriptural doctrines taught by the Church of Rome. It is a disheartening and grievous thing that a large number of professing Christians should so corrupt Apostolic Doctrine; but it is more

disheartening and grievous when this corrupt teaching is forced upon others, especially on those of our own Church.

In the early days of the Church's existence, each Church was under its own Bishop, though in union with all the others. There was no interference one with another. So it was in the Apostles' days with the Church of Corinth, of Ephesus and all the Churches in every place. So it was with our own Church of England. Not till after the lapse of centuries, in the Middle Ages, did the Bishop of Rome claim supremacy over all Churches everywhere and the right to make new doctrines. For a while, for political reasons, the Church of England was forced to submit to this supremacy, but not without protesting against it from time to time.

At length, 350 years ago, our Church was able to throw off the usurped domination of the Bishop of Rome and to assert her ancient independence, to repudiate the errors which he taught and to return to the primitive and apostolic purity of faith; still the same Church, but devoid of false doctrines and new practices, as a garden is still the same garden when the weeds which disfigured it are rooted up.

And now the Bishop of Rome is making great efforts to deprive our Church again of her independence and to force on her new doctrines invented by man. There are many in this country who are sent on this mission by the Bishop of Rome – the Bishop of a distant Italian Church – to interfere where there is already a true Apostolic Church. Our Church, therefore, must protest against this interference; she must be a Protestant Church protesting against Rome and all its errors. For the Bishop of Rome to set up a Church in England is an act of schism.

Let us then be true to the Holy Catholic Church of England which teaches the whole truth revealed by God in Christ, without adding to it, as the Roman dissenters do, without taking from it as do the other dissenting sects. For it is the same Church in doctrine, order, and continuity as the primitive Church founded by the Apostles, having the true apostolic succession of ministers, holding all “the faith once delivered to the Saints.”

Opening of new church:

The ancient and picturesque little town of Ludlow upon the Welsh Marches represents for the moment the last step forward made by Catholicism in this country. For some years past, a permanent Catholic mission has been in contemplation, and a strip of land with two houses has already been given for the purpose by Miss Davis, of Elm Lodge, but though the fervent prayers of a handful of devout residents cannot have been without their effect, no further progress had for a long time been made. It was only when Ludford Park came into the possession of its present occupants about 18 months ago that opportunity offered for a new and earnest appeal, with promises of help, addressed to the Bishop of Shrewsbury by some of the newcomers. The appeal was successful, and Ludlow has now both church and resident pastor. Moreover, thanks to the generous co-operation of all classes and to the stimulus and example of one devoted lady, herself a convert of recent date, the mission is provided with at least the necessaries for worship, and is at the same time free from any grievous load of debt.

Last Sunday, January 26, the formal inauguration of the new building was celebrated by a Catholic function, the like of which, we may safely say, has not been seen in Ludlow since the Reformation. In the unavoidable absence through illness of the Bishop of the diocese, his place was appropriately taken by Bishop Mostyn of Menevia, from the other side of the Welsh border. The Mass, *coram episcopo*, was sung by Father McGeever of Stockport, the deacon was Father Kelly, and the subdeacon Father Fisher, the zealous priest in charge of the new mission. The master of ceremonies was Father Chichele Giles, while Father Thurston, S.J., and Father Placid Conway, O.P., acted as deacons at the throne. The Bishop preached an impressive sermon. Taking for his text the words of Genesis xxviii. 17: "How terrible is this place! This is no other but the house of God and the gate of heaven," he reminded the congregation of the deep and abiding influence which their church should exercise upon the lives of every Christian community as being the home of the Blessed Sacrament and the ordinary channel of God's graces for all the faithful. It was here they brought their children to be baptised; it was here that Confirmation was administered; it was here that the load of sin was lifted for the penitent; it was here that all approached the altar to receive the bread of life. His lordship also pointed out that in the dedication of this little church to St. Peter they had a reminder of their dependence on the great centre of union for all Christendom, and he hailed it as a happy omen that this dedication replaced that of a chapel which had in ancient days been erected in honour of St. Peter in the outer ward of Ludlow Castle. He concluded with an appeal that, as the newly-built church was already all but rid of debt, the amount of contributions made by those present on that day might be sufficient to clear off the balance and leave the mission free.

His lordship's words were generously responded to, and the collection, which was made by two prominent Catholic residents, Mr. Arthur Brown, of Ludford Park, and Major Molyneux Seele, D.S.O., showed once again how earnestly all classes have united in the effort to make this new development of the Catholic Church in Shropshire worthy of the cause. In the evening, the little building, which seats about 250, was quite unequal to accommodate the crowd who were eager to assist at the Pontifical Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and at the Dominican sermon which

preceded it. Father Placid Conway, in his eloquent discourse, produced a visible impression upon the attentive throng when he told them of the glories of Catholic Ludlow in pre-Reformation times, of the Masses that were offered in their stately parish church, of the religious houses of Carmelites and Austin Friars, with other charitable institutions in the town, and of the Dominicans from the neighbouring priory of Shrewsbury, who over and over again must have preached in Ludlow, wearing the same habit which they saw him wearing now. Not less effective was the preacher's allusion to the martyred priest, William Davis, who, in 1593, had been dragged from his place of confinement in Beaumaris Castle and brought before the Council of the Marches at Ludlow, and who, when tricked into being present at church under pretence of a conference with heretical ministers, began to shout the Psalms from his Breviary at the top of his voice to drown the service which the ministers were reciting from the Book of Common Prayer. The church which had that day been opened was the same in unalterable faith and practice with that which had existed in England in ancient times, and which the Reformation had attempted to sweep away.

The sermon was preceded by the service of the Sacred Heart and followed by Solemn Benediction. A word of praise must be given to the choir, entirely recruited from members of the little congregation, which bravely and most creditably faced the ordeal of these two long services. That so much should have been accomplished in so short a space of time is an omen, we must hope, of the great things which Father Fisher is destined to achieve before Ludlow can spare him for any other work.

Via Ludlow Library: 'The Ludlow Advertiser' on February 1st 1908.

Correspondence signed 'Free Churchman'

As a Free Churchman who attended the crowded service at the Ludlow Catholic Church last Sunday evening, I should like to express a few words of appreciation with regard to the service. Not only was the singing excellent and the devotional spirit beyond all praise, but the eloquent sermon preached by the Rev. Placid Conway will probably live for many years to come in the memories of those who had the great pleasure of listening to it. While Free Churchmen cannot help differing with Catholics on matters of doctrine, we may at least appreciate and admire their devotional spirit and we can partly understand why such devotional souls as Newman and Manning were won over to the Catholic Church. I know the bitterness which exists in the minds of many Protestants towards the Catholic religion, as also of some Catholics towards Protestantism, but let us hope that the bitterness will yet be buried in oblivion, and to all Protestants who seek a kindlier spirit towards Catholics I would recommend them to read William Cobbett's 'History of the Protestant Reformation.' They will find that all we have been taught upon the subject of Catholicism has not been the unvarnished truth.

When we remember that Catholicism has produced such men and women as Francis of Assisi, Fenelon, Madame Guyon etc, and that Father Mathew was the founder of the temperance movement – assisted in his vigorous temperance campaign by an Irish Quaker - that thousands of devoted priests, monks and nuns have braved the horrors of pestilence, famine and persecution, we are forced to the conclusion that all the goodness does not belong to Protestants only. When we also remember that for many hundreds of years it was the only religion of the country, that the land in the possession of the ancient monasteries was let under very easy conditions to the workers, that for several centuries under Catholicism abject poverty as we know it today was unknown, we must feel that the alarm felt by many Protestants at the growth of Catholicism is altogether unnecessary.

As a Free Churchman who believes in the growth and progress of the soul after death, I have no objection to 'prayers for the dead' which are regarded with such horror by so many of my brethren. Let us advocate the spirit of toleration, appreciate goodness and devotion, wherever we find it, and pray for the time to come when we all shall be 'One in hope and doctrine, one in charity.'

Via the Parish Office: Fr. Fisher scrapbook.
Friday, July 16th, 1909

On Sunday, June 27th, St. Peter's Church was well filled with a congregation of various sects and beliefs, it being the opening service of a mission to non-Catholics by the Rev. Father J. O'Neill, S.J. The choral service of the Sacred Heart was sung and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was given by Father Fisher. There was a question box at the bottom of the church, and many earnest and sincere questions were asked. The service was closed each evening with Benediction and the recital of the Holy Father's prayer to the Sacred Heart for reunion. On Sunday last, the mission was brought to a close with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, and the little congregation watched in turn and prayed for the conversion of non-Catholics.

Via the Parish Office: Fr. Fisher scrapbook.
The funeral of Edward VII: Saturday, May 21st, 1910

In accordance with instructions, Father Fisher on the day of his late Majesty's funeral offered up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass at 11 a.m. The church bell was tolled at 10.45 a.m., at which hour the members of the congregation, dressed in deep mourning, began to assemble. Addressing those present, Father Fisher said: "The British Empire has been suddenly plunged into sorrow by the death of the King. His wise statesmanship, his skilful tact, his beneficent kindness have been torn from us. But whilst we feel sorrow for our great loss, don't let us be selfishly unmindful of what may be the great needs of the late monarch's soul. To the eyes of the world, he was a strong king of a strong people, but to the eyes of God he is but a child of Adam, and his soul must stand the same searching and impartial judgement as the humblest. Whilst the air then is full of voices speaking about him; and the Press day after day recounts his deeds of merit, and the world is laying its wreaths upon the coffin, and men are giving him a funeral pageant that befits a great king, let us pass in spirit from the busy scene around the silent body of the dead king, to the land of spirits behind the veil of life, and let our prayers like a train of suppliants ascend before the throne of God." The Psalm 'Miserere' was then said and the Dead March was played by Mr. V. O'Connor (*described in 1993 as someone who could make the organ talk*).

Via the Parish Office: Fr. Fisher scrapbook.

The first Episcopal Visitation since the Reformation was made by the Bishop of Shrewsbury, the Right Reverend H. Singleton, on August 21st 1910. Of the sixteen whom he confirmed, ten were converts.

On Good Friday in 1914, at three o'clock, a life-size devotional crucifix was unveiled in the grounds in front of the church in the presence of a large congregation, many Protestants being present. The devotional singing by the choir in the open air of the 'Christus factus est' helped to make the ceremony very impressive.

Reminiscences of Mick Maddox (I)

On the first day of World War I, my granddad, Bill Lewis, signed on to join the army. He was quickly sent to France to fight in the trenches. He left a wife and five children in Ludlow.

The Germans used gas on our troops and my granddad was very badly gassed, so bad that he was unconscious for many months. My poor gran received a telegram saying he was missing, presumed dead.

At that time, the Catholic Church was in Julian Road. The Priest heard our family's bad news and visited them. He said, if they would allow him, he would visit them every day and he and the family would pray for their dad. This the family duly did.

Then, one morning, my mum got up and there was a knock on the front door and there stood her dad. Imagine the effect this had on my mum and her family. They became very strong Catholics. All the family married in the church. The Catholic priests at that time lived in 47 and 48 Gravel Hill, which form the corner of Julian Road.

1925 – 1938 FATHER ARTHUR HENRY D'ARCY

As early as February 14th 1927, Mrs. Arthur Cardwell Brown, formerly of Gravel Hill and Ludford House but now living in Buenos Ayres, had signified her intention to donate £6,000 towards the cost of building a new Catholic church in Ludlow and to give £500 towards its maintenance. The site chosen had been a hayfield.

Details of St. Peter's Church, Henley Road

Architect: Signor Dr. G. Rinvoluceri of Cadnant Park, Conway, North Wales. He also designed churches in Princes Risborough and Abergele.

Foundation stone laid on May 9th 1935. Opened and consecrated on July 2nd 1936 by Bishop Ambrose Moriarty, the special preacher being Archbishop Goodier.

The overall cost was £35,000.

Building contractors: Messrs Treasure & Son.

A large amount of local labour was employed.

Structure: natural stone from the Farlow Quarry, Clee Hill, matching that used at Ludlow Castle.
oak block flooring
marble sanctuary.

Dimensions: 150 feet long; 100 feet high to cross on dome; 75 feet wide.

Style: Plain Romanesque.

Dome: In the Byzantine style and signifying heaven and earth united in praising God. The original motif for the interior of the dome was that of a dove, representing the Holy Spirit. In May 1993, however, Philip Jackson designed and made the current decoration. The twelve stars in gold leaf depict St. Peter and the other Apostles.

Ground plan: A short Latin Cross to ensure clear sight of the dome at all angles.

Interior: Vast and full of light, reminiscent of the grandeur and majesty of buildings of the spacious pre-Reformation days in Latin countries.

This was the first attempt ever made to build arches on the inside in reinforced concrete.

The bell, weighing just over 7 cwt, was cast at the Whitechapel Foundry in 1936. The Whitechapel Foundry has been making bells for over 400 years and is now the longest continuous manufacturing company in Britain.

The digital organ came from Wyverns of Surrey in September 1997. It has two manuals and pedal board and is fitted with 'draw' stops arranged in panels to the left and right of the manuals. There are eight speakers mounted in a case on the right hand side of the back gallery and decorated with silver-finished pipes.

The pipe organ on the left hand side of the gallery came from the Catholic Church at Newport, Shropshire. After delivery at St. Peter's, it was painstakingly sorted and assembled by John Davies of Leintwardine.

The stained glass at the east end is full of Ludlow Blue tint made by Hardman of Birmingham who also restored the glass in Ludlow's pre-Reformation Parish Church

of St. Laurence. The window came from the original church in Julian Hall and is dated 1906. The figures from left to right are St. Peter, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and St. George. The inscription is to Isobel Brown, the foundress of the church, and the window is dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel in memory of John Pearson. It had originally been unveiled on January 31st 1909, having been commissioned by W.H. Pearson of Buenos Ayres.

The rose window at the west end was designed by Earleys of Dublin in 1963 and shows Our Lady presenting the Christ Child to the world.

The wooden crucifix was specially carved for the Church by Aloisi Lang, the village carpenter of Oberammergau who played the role of Christ in the Passion Plays for 30 years.

The tapestry adorning the Lady Chapel was designed and worked by Miss Barbara Fletcher of Mary Knowle. She was a convert and was received into the Church on March 24th 1950. The flowers depicted were all grown in her garden and she adorned the church with such flowers for many years. It measures five yards in length, one yard in width, has a million and a half stitches and used six pounds of wool. Started in 1962, it was completed and blessed in 1965. It had been a labour of love and a mammoth task for Miss Fletcher, considering that she had very poor eyesight. Originally it was displayed on a large wooden stand but it was later transferred to a wall mounting, to provide extra space for seating. Although the tapestry has remained in the Lady Chapel for so long, it has stood the test of time. Its delicate colours have not faded and it appears today just as beautiful as it was when first installed. In addition to her embroidery skills, Miss Fletcher also made lovely soft toys and sold them in aid of St. Peter's church funds. In 1984, Miss Fletcher was awarded the Bene Merenti medal for her tireless work and outstanding generosity.

The crosses on the main doors and on the gates on Dodmore Lane represent the manner of St. Peter's death.

The appliqué banner that rotates with the 2008 centenary banner near the altar depicts the Holy Spirit descending to earth from Lake Galilee. It was made by Carrie Sidoli and was given to her brother-in-law, Father Paul Sidoli, who presented it to the Parish when he left in 1998.

The fourteen Stations of the Cross were supplied by Gortings of Ludlow and were painted by their employee Bernard Davies, who was a parishioner.

The reminiscences of Fred Griffiths recorded recently by Chris Hyde. They must refer to 1936.

We were the first choir, to my knowledge, to sing in the Roman Catholic church, after they finished it. We were all scruffy little lads, running round, and the parson, if I pronounce it correctly, Father D'Arcy, he had a big dog, like an English sheepdog or something, and he used to give the little kids a ride on the dog's back! Anyway, he took us round, up the tower, as he had a bell that rang every day at certain times. He said, "I got something for you!" He showed us the Stations of the Cross, the things in

the wall, the plaques and all that, the statues. He said, "Will you do something for me? Will you go and stand up in that gallery, that's where the organ is. I want to be serving at the altar; I want to know whether I can hear properly." So we did that; course, we all been to Sunday School, we all knew a few verses of some carols. We sang to him. He thanked us very much, and there's one thing I remember about that Roman Catholic church. When they built it, the dome was gold! I don't know if it was gold leaf or what it was, but the dome was gold. Along came the war; they said that would have been a real good marker for the German bombers coming over, so they painted it black, and it's still black to this day. It was beautiful; the sun on there was terrific, when the sun shone on that gold leaf.

The dome, alas, was copper but must have looked magnificent, when pristine, whatever its composition.

The reminiscences of Fred Brereton

It was a great surprise and disappointment, when St. Peter's was consecrated, to discover how bad the acoustics were. Soon after, the interior was sprayed with granulated cork to hopefully effect a cure, but it didn't. That does, however, explain why the walls and pillars are rough.

Originally, what is now the lounge was the vestry and sacristy. The priest entered to celebrate Mass through the door to the right of the altar, the congregation's right, that is. What is now the sacristy was the confessional. The choir sang up in the gallery where the acoustics were better. There has been much alteration done at the back of the church in more recent years.

In days gone by, there was no planned giving, but a bench rent, and the pews were named, more or less from front to rear according to social standing. One Sunday, there was a buzz in church as someone recognised John McCormack, the great Irish tenor.

Father D'Arcy, rotund, breathless and cheerful, was much liked by the Ludlow citizens of all faiths. He delivered a short sermon at confession, repeated three times, and again twice at Mass. Although there weren't many going to confession, a queue soon built up because of this. Communion, then, was strictly on the first Sunday of the month, following confession on Saturday evening.

(At the funeral of Philip Brereton, it was learnt that the church bell was always known as the 'Brereton Bell' and that he used to put stones down on the drive in the days before the tarmac was laid. He also sent his farm labourers in to keep the hedges in good order.)

Material summarised from the Diocesan Archives Box 1.

The resignation of Father D'Arcy on the grounds of severe ill health in August 1938 was recorded by the 'Birmingham Post'. He had resisted the idea of taking on a curate such as Fr. Bernard Giblin (q.v.). When he could not undertake house visits, small groups of parishioners visited him at the Presbytery. At the very time of the

consecration of the new church, he had been at odds with his Bishop over the status of his housekeeper of 25 years, who wished to live with her husband-to-be at the Presbytery. In this regard, he was accused by Bishop Moriarty of presenting a fait accompli after the Bishop had repeatedly made his own standpoint perfectly clear. Dire sanctions were threatened in a long, handwritten letter from the Bishop which survives in the Diocesan Archives. He was also in hot water over the misuse of flowers and music at weddings. At this juncture, he was so ill that many of his replies to the Bishop had to be written by his brother Joseph, a Jesuit. He retired to Twyford Abbey, Berkshire, and died in January 1941.

Father Bernard Giblin (1938) (Source: Salford Archives Online)

At the early age of 27, and in the first year of his priesthood, Father Giblin died after an illness of only two days. He was ordained by Bishop Henshaw at St. Bede's College on December 6th 1937. In February 1938, he was sent on loan from the Diocese of Salford to Shrewsbury and was appointed to St. Peter's Ludlow. There he remained until September when he was transferred to St. Joseph's Stockport. He was best remembered for his love of our Blessed Lady whose shrine at Lourdes he visited six times.

One major headache that Father Briscoe inherited from his predecessor involved the teething problems that the recently built church was experiencing. Some of these have never successfully been resolved. The following memorandum/ultimatum was addressed to the architect, presumably by a Diocesan solicitor just before World War II.

From the Diocesan Archives Box 1

I have seen your letters to Fr. Briscoe regarding the church and house at Ludlow. It is obvious that you do not understand the gravity of the defects which have occurred and to which it is only fair that, before taking other steps, I should invite your serious and urgent attention.

(1) The failure of the heating system to perform the functions for which it is designed.

(2) The failure of the roofs to keep out water.

It is generally accepted that comparatively thin concrete and cement is not sufficient for this purpose. The fact is implicitly recognised by you inasmuch as you have covered the roof with some form of bitumastic paint. This protective covering has proved defective and to a great extent has ceased to exist. I suppose some movement and pining of material is not exceptional in the case of new concrete, with corresponding cracks and fissures. The point is that where there is evidence of such movement the absence of any protective covering results in the admission of water, particularly in the house.

(3) The dampness of the church generally and the absence of effective heating have resulted in the displacement of a large number of wood blocks. Owing to the same causes, the vestments, cassocks etc are perpetually damp and the cases containing the sacred vessels are covered with mould. These conditions are equally bad in the house in spite of open windows and fires, with consequent grave danger to health.

(4) The 'crazy paving' of the terrace in front of the main entrance and the steps therefrom to the drive are formed of rough 'rock-faced' stone. The inequalities of the surface cause water to stand in pools which freeze in winter and are a source of danger.

(5) The blind wall of the passage from house to sacristy is so thin that it appears to admit water freely. The oak panelling is completely ruined and unfit even for repair.

(6) The acoustics of the church are deplorable and interfere seriously with the purpose for which it is designed. No doubt you are aware of the remedies which modern scientific methods provide to counteract this defect.

(7) The damp has already caused the external corrosion of the electric light tubing. Anxiety is naturally felt as to the spread of this corrosion to the interior with consequent failure of the lighting installation. There does not appear to be any means of access – other than scaffolding – to the tubing embedded in the concrete vaults.

(8) One of the turrets at the west end is open to the weather with the result that water runs down the internal wall. In a lesser degree the same occurs in the other turret which appears to have some form of covering below the open arcade...

If you regard the contractors at fault in any of these respects, it is difficult to imagine, at least in most of the instances I mention, the defects were not easily observable at the time. In that event, it is not clear how you came to issue the final certificate.

Alternatively, I must confess that a large proportion of these unfortunate failures appears to me to be attributable to the original design and specification for which you are solely responsible.

I should be glad if you would examine and report on these matters at your early convenience as I cannot expose the priest and congregation to these conditions any longer.

Following the declaration of hostilities by Italy in June 1940, the consequence of the Fall of France, the architect of St. Peter's, Dr. Guiseppe Rinvoluceri, was interned. The plea by his wife for outstanding architect's fees met with the stiff-lipped response below.

From the Diocesan Archives Box 1

E. R. Hoskinson, Solicitors,
Tower Buildings,
22 Water Street,
Liverpool 3.

To the Right Rev. A. Moriarty, D.D.,
The Council House, Shrewsbury.

7th August, 1940

My dear Lord,

It is not right that we should deal with any person other than this man's solicitors... This man is an enemy alien, and under the Defence of the Realm Emergency Regulations, any money due by any British subject to an enemy alien must be reported to the Custodian of Alien Property...

St. Peter's in World War II (Immediate source: Story of Our Parish 2005)

During Father Pears' time in the early 1940s, Ludlow was a centre for evacuee children from Birmingham and Liverpool. The Catholic children, mainly from Liverpool, were billeted outside the town around Clee Hill and the surrounding villages, so St. Peter's had to hire a bus every Sunday. One elderly teacher helped by a parishioner went out and collected the children for Mass and took them back again. At that time, the Legion of Mary had been formed in the parish and this was part of their work. *How difficult things could be is illustrated by a friend of the editor, Miss Teresa Breen from Liverpool, who was then a young teacher and had accompanied many of the evacuees to safety. One weekday afternoon in winter, she had been to a matinee at the cinema in Ludlow on her day off. By the time she came out of the show, so much snow had fallen that the usual bus service had been suspended. Any transport still on the road had been commandeered by the Army and so she had to trudge back through the drifts to Hopton Wafers where she was billeted. She survived to a ripe old age!*

During the war, Ludlow was also the home of many servicemen. There was an Army camp and an Air Force Cadet camp on the Leominster Road. Many of these servicemen were Catholics and marched up to St. Peter's for Sunday Mass. But at that time, St. Peter's had nowhere to entertain them so quite a number were invited to parishioners' homes for coffee or tea after Mass. Sometimes this was to Mary's Meadow, the home of Mr and Mrs Armel O'Connor alongside the river. Mr. O'Connor was organist at St. Peter's, and his wife a well-known authoress, both staunch Catholics. At Mary's Meadow, in a most picturesque setting, the 'boys' would gather along the river bank and be treated to refreshments – freshly-baked doughnuts being a speciality as rationing was waived by local bakers when it came to the Forces. Then usually everyone "sang for their supper" – truly memorable occasions.

Father Pears was so anxious that service personnel should have somewhere to go in the evenings apart from pubs and clubs, that he hired a room in the centre of town for five nights a week where the more serious could go for a quiet read or write letters, while he himself would come most nights and play board games such as chess, or talk with anyone wishing to talk. Home-made refreshments were provided in homely surroundings by several ladies from the parish every night - a service very much appreciated.

Later, Ludlow was the home to American Service personnel, most of whom were Catholics, who used to fill the church to capacity, sitting in the balconies, choir and sometimes even in the sanctuary. Henley Road used to be filled with jeeps on Sundays during Mass.

Prisoners of war also descended on Ludlow and at various times we had Germans, Italians and Ukrainians. Again, there were many Catholics among them and they used to be marched to Mass on Sundays. All these nationalities had great musical talent to contribute and their singing would resound throughout the church – whose acoustics have always been good for music although bad for preaching. At one Midnight Mass

in Father Pownall's time, the Germans provided an orchestra from their ranks, which played in the balcony, whilst St. Peter's provided a young choirboy who sang a most moving solo. The Ukrainians had their own chaplain, billeted with a parishioner, and they used to fill one whole half of the church. Their deep voices were a joy to listen to and enriched the services. On another occasion, the German prisoners organised a concert for St. Peter's funds in the old church in Julian Road, then being used as a hall. We were very badly off in those days and in debt. The concert was attended by the then Mayor of Ludlow and the Town Councillors. Many years later, at least one German ex-prisoner brought his wife to England and came to Mass to thank the parish for the hospitality he had received while a prisoner of war.

Material summarised from the Diocesan Archives Box 1

Complaints by disaffected parishioners in any Parish may strike one as bizarre years after they were made. In this instance, someone claimed that Father Pears had held up Mass in order for her to be ejected from a pew reserved for servicemen which she had refused to vacate. A shouting match ensued. Later, according to the complainant, the Priest denied that such an incident had ever happened. On another occasion, as a result of a tussle whilst receiving the Host, the same individual was barred by the Bishop from Holy Communion. Her reaction was to put the whole blame on the unfortunate Parish Priest who, however, had shown "great restraint and forbearance" under severe persecution, as had other priests, if one is to believe a letter written by the redoubtable Armel O'Connor, no less.

Quite different, according to an old lady who kept a lodging house in 1946, were the easy social relations that Father Pears, or his successor, enjoyed with other members of the Parish. She recently recalled that the Parish Priest, every Saturday night, used to go and play cards with Teresa Pennington but always stopped on the stroke of midnight. She believed it was because he was not allowed to gamble on the Sabbath. However, it could have been to avoid having to decline any kind of refreshment when the obligation to fast before Mass came into effect. Or perhaps the motive was as simple as the need to secure a decent night's rest before all that a traditional Sunday schedule entailed!

1946 – 1950 FATHER RONALD JOSEPH POWNALL
1950 - 1954 FATHER WILFRID KELLY

Reminiscences of Una Uffindell

I have always lived in Ludlow and have seen many changes to the Parish. I have fond memories of St. Peter's which has always played a big part in my life.

In the early years, we were a very poor parish. I recall two parishioners coming to my family home for money. They went around all the Catholic homes in Ludlow collecting money, just to try to keep St. Peter's running. In those days, the priests would not only bring all their belongings, when they moved, but also any furniture required. I recall one priest came with no bed and very little furniture. It was very sad to see this. In winter it would get so cold in St. Peter's that one would wonder if life would come back into the hands or feet, there was so very little heating.

I would go to 8 a.m. Mass on a Sunday morning and then, in the afternoon, I would go to Sunday School. Teaching the Catholic faith was very regimental. My sister, brother and I would receive through the post leaflets mailed to us by a nun named Sister Winifred. She resided at a convent in Rugby. The leaflets had questions printed on them to test us on what we had learnt about the Catholic faith. We would fill them in and return them to her for marking.

We all attended Julian Hall at 9 a.m. each school morning for religious instruction. Many of my school days were sad. The state schools of the day were often against Catholics. We were made to feel second-rate and we generally had a raw deal. I recall my father mentioning that his sister had gone to a school Christmas party, one year, with a cup and plate. She was told to go back home, she wasn't welcome. I am pleased to see that the attitude towards Catholics has now changed in schools.

We have had nice priests over the years, one being Fr. Kelly. He was funny and had a really good sense of humour. Fr. Kelly kept a horse in the field next to the church. He would walk it down through the town and often called at my home in Old Street. My mother could be seen stood in the doorway talking to Fr. Kelly and then offering his horse a carrot or two to be getting on with!

Further evidence, if needed, of what problems Catholics could encounter at the time is afforded by the following letter written by Father Wilfrid Kelly.

From the Diocesan Archives Box 1

H. J. King Esq., B.Comm.,
Youth Hostels Association,
Welwyn Garden City, Herts.

St. Peter's,
Henley Road, Ludlow.
September 12th 1954

Dear Sir,

I am enclosing a report in this letter concerning certain incidents which took place on Sept. 12th at Ludlow. I have always understood that the Y.H.A. does everything in its power to encourage those of its members who wish to attend Divine Service and that it endeavours to have wardens who are even-tempered in their dealings with members and courteous and co-operative to others who have an interest in its members' welfare.

The facts set out in my report would seem to show that the male warden of the Ludlow Y.H.A. Hostel gave a lamentable exhibition of bad temper and insulted Catholic members of the Y.H.A. in general and the boy Peter Turrall in particular. He was incredibly rude to me when I very courteously asked him for information about the matter. He apparently has the idea that he can do anything he wishes in the Hostel, regardless of the effect it may have on the members' attendance at Divine Service.

I very much regret having to bring these matters to the notice of the Association but, since I have had previous complaints and actual experience of Y.H.A. members being prevented from coming to Divine Service by this man, it is my duty to fully inform both his superiors and mine of the situation. The Bishop of Shrewsbury has asked me to forward your comments to him...

Reminiscences of Brenda Ellis (I)

My mother, the late Clara Watkins, came to Ludlow in October 1946. Coming from Ireland, she must have been surprised to discover only seven people at the early Sunday morning Mass. In her former parish, it was standing room only.

My first encounter with St. Peter's should have been my baptism on January 4th 1948. Instead, I was christened at home, as my life was in danger, in Wigley Lane by Father Pownall.

Father Kelly had a horse called Peter and a dog called Ming, a chow which to me as a child looked like a giant teddy bear with its purple tongue.

1954 – 1960 FATHER ALBERT ROBERTS

1961 – 1964 FATHER MICHAEL ALEXANDER ENGLISH

Reminiscences of Mick Maddox (II)

Father Kelly was very artistic. He kept two chow dogs and even a horse. Tony, my brother, and I carried on being altar boys until Tony was called up for National Service. When he came out of the army, he married Mary but was recalled immediately for the Suez Crisis. (October 1956) I was called up and joined the Royal Engineers and was sent to Christmas Island. Tony and I came out of the army together in 1960. Tony managed to rent off the church a house called 48 Gravel Hill and I moved into a flat above him. We also became caretakers of Julian Hall, now being used for functions like whist drives and Old Tyme dancing.

At that time, a new priest appeared on the scene and we naturally thought he was a replacement for poor Father Roberts but this was not the case. Father English had actually been posted to the Wirral but due to the fact that Ludlow had been suffering very low attendances and had no income of any sort, it was bankrupt and he had been sent first to Ludlow to close it down. Every tradesman in Ludlow was after Father English with unpaid bills. He told me it was far worse than they had realized in Shrewsbury.

About this time, my two younger brothers had started a Rock group called 'Four Aces' and had practised in the Hall. We had run a few dances for them and saw the potential to raise money. Also, bingo was being run in Leominster but there was none in Ludlow. So, after Dad died, when Father English visited Mum and said he would soon have to leave to go to his new parish, we called a family meeting and decided we would run dances on Saturday night and bingo on Friday evening in Julian Hall. Father English said he had to return to Shrewsbury for at least a week but would put our scheme to the authorities. He couldn't promise anything but would do his best. Once he was back, he called Tony and said it was good news.

While he was away, Father English had ordered 120 stacking chairs, 30 tables that would seat six each, and about 20 large sheets of plywood to make a stage. At that time, I was working with M.E.B. as a fridge engineer and I worked Saturday mornings. I got home at lunchtime, so, after a quick cuppa, I went into the hall. I stacked all the tables and the boards on top to make a temporary stage. The group performed on these.

I was working with the M.E.B on a very high wage, £20 a week, but the dances made anything like £20 -£30 a week and the bingo ran on for twenty years making anything like £25 when they had a jackpot going.

Reminiscences of Brenda Ellis (II)

Father Roberts was a very private person but he kept budgerigars. When Father English arrived, the Presbytery was in a shocking state while the grounds were covered in undergrowth, bushes and trees. Soon, however, a band of helpers got together and, so, lawns were established and paths, car parks and driveways laid down. The church was painted afresh, new heating was installed and the roof was put to rights. Whenever anything needed to be done, people seemed to appear to help. Cash was raised through bingo, dances, raffles and sales of work in Julian Hall while there were many donations of money as well. Later, overhead heating replaced the oil heating that was brought in at that time. Before, the only form of heating was three small paraffin heaters down the centre aisle.

Reminiscences of Betty Smith (I)

We came to Ludlow from Clitheroe in August 1956 – just in time for Suez. Our small business was very badly affected. With severe petrol rationing, our customers could not get to us and we could not travel. Moreover, we soon realised that the Parish was in difficulties. Father Roberts was a sick man and all offers of help were turned away. The Parish grounds were a wilderness and we had no access to the Presbytery. We did, however, hold a Christmas Fair in the old church in Julian Road where the Parish also owned a house. My memories are of a bitterly cold hall in which to prepare the stalls. It had been heated simply for the day of the Fair.

We struggled on until Father Roberts was taken to hospital after a letter to the Bishop from Barbara Fletcher – good and brave soul. Otherwise, Father might have died at the altar. Father English was sent to close this ailing – and to the Bishop – bothersome parish, but he soon realised that we would put up a good fight to stop this happening. Father English took this news to the Bishop, who was far from pleased and had washed his hands of Ludlow. Under the strong leadership of Father English, who saved the Parish at great personal cost to himself and his relations with his Bishop, we pulled through. When the house was made decent, two Sisters who had looked after Father English in his old parish, came to take charge of the Presbytery and also gave much help and encouragement to us all.

Father English's old parishioners also gave us valuable financial aid, some £500, I seem to remember. They visited us one Sunday by coach and we put on a 'great' tea for them. All our women and men were involved to make it a special occasion. The sight of our Parish Grande Dame – 'Dotty' Molyneux Seel – sitting on an upturned bucket to eat a tomato sandwich was a spectacle to be cherished.

**Via the Parish Office: Father Fisher scrapbook.
Friday, August 4, 1961**

After hundreds of years, Roman Catholics who live in and around Cleobury Mortimer will soon have a church they can call their own. It will cost some £7,000 and will be called St. Elizabeth's. Preliminary work – levelling the ground and marking out the foundations – has just started and it is planned to have the building open by Christmas. For years, people have had to make their way – and a long one at that – from Cleobury Mortimer to Mawley Hall, former home of the Blount family. Here they were allowed to worship in the chapel of St. Mary. However, when Mawley Hall was sold in November last year, following the death of Sir Walter Blount, the chapel was also sold. But as the chapel had never been consecrated, it was decided that no steps should be taken to retain it. Sir Walter, in his will, gave a piece of land in Lower-street, Cleobury Mortimer, and £1,000 for the erection of the church. But with such a small number of Roman Catholics – there are only 144 at the moment – this looked more like a dream than anything else. That 'dream', however, will probably have come true by the end of this year. The building, which is a combination of contemporary and traditional design, will consist of a hall at the rear and partly underneath the church. In the church there will be a seating capacity for 150 people. There will be car parks at the front and rear of the church and a feature of the building will be the 35 foot high spire. "The idea of this is to catch people's eyes," says the architect, Mr. Roman Lewandowski of Ludlow. Constructed of a light steel frame surrounded by faced bricks, the windows and doors will be in oak. The interior will also be in oak. The only link that will be maintained with St. Mary's Chapel will be by the altar vessels and fittings which have been in use there throughout the centuries and are now to be transferred to the new church.

Diocesan Archives Box 1

Father Michael English invites, at very short notice, the new Bishop of Shrewsbury, William Grasar, to officiate at the opening of St. Elizabeth's.

May 7th 1962

My Lord,

Please accept my congratulations on your appointment to Shrewsbury. I was sincerely delighted at the news and hope we will not break your heart when you come to rule us.

I am very aware of the fact that it is not quite 'proper' to burden you with affairs from here at the moment but Father Abbott suggests that in view of the circumstances it is better to write now. We are due to open a new church at Cleobury Mortimer within a few weeks. This is the absolute outpost of the Diocese, in which Catholics are less than one per square mile, but they are really wonderful people. Having spent twelve years in the biggest parish in the Diocese (*Wythenshawe*) where we had all the props of the Faith, I have unbounded respect for the people here who struggle in really difficult circumstances. It really matters that the new Bishop should be at the opening of the church...

Material summarised from Diocesan Archives Box 1

Father English, though, was rather less enthusiastic about what seemed to be going on at Moor Park School. This had been recently founded by Hugh Watts and Derek Henderson as a Catholic boys' boarding school. It is now co-educational, with both day and boarding pupils. For 25 years or so, it had its own resident chaplain but, when Fr. Raymond from Belmont and Fr. John Lynch moved on in 1989, the Parish Priest of St. Peter's took on the mantle of school chaplain, firmly establishing close ties between the school and parish. Relations, however, at the outset were somewhat strained.

What was irking Father English in April 1964 was that, in accordance with the Bishop's wish, it would be possible for the pupils without serious inconvenience to be brought to Mass at St. Peter's for a few months until Moor Park had its own chapel. This arrangement had not materialised. Instead, a Benedictine visitor (*Dom Brendan Lavery from Downside*) to the school had said Mass in the classrooms on a few occasions and 'sometimes had a banjo and guitar playing' which the Parish Priest found, 'to say the least, strange.' Clearly, the era of Folk Masses had yet to dawn! The same or another Benedictine incurred criticism for having taken part in the Unity debate in Ludlow without reference to the Bishop.

Diocesan Archives Box 1

The 1964 Parish Boundaries

From the County Boundary at Wooferton to Richards Castle (Salop end of the village) along Herefordshire border to Whitcliffe to Wetmore Cross to Brandhill to Rowton and then to stream at Stokesay up to Hope Dale to Stass Coppice then to include Millichope Park and Hungerford, Broadstone, Brookhampton, down line of Brown Clee swinging round to Burwarton (exclude) and there joining Cleobury Mortimer R.D.C. boundary and following it to Ludlow R.D.C. boundary at Tenbury Wells, then following line of Salop border with Worcestershire and Herefordshire to Wooferton.

1964 – 1967 FATHER RICHARD DUNPHY**From the Diocesan Archives Box 1****Ecumenism**8th December, 1966

My dear Father Dunphy,

Thank you for your letter of 6th December giving me plans for Christian Unity Week. It is not permissible for us to attend non-Catholic services, even during the Unity Octave. If people would like to come to our service, they will be most welcome but it would be a mistake to invite them because we are not able to accept a reciprocal invitation.

(William Grasar) Bishop of Shrewsbury

From the Diocesan Archives Box 1**Obligation Masses****Memorandum from Fr Dunphy on 13th April 1967**

- One annual Mass for Miss Brown. She gave £8,000 for the new church.
- Caroline Davies. One annual Mass... decided by Bishop Singleton in 1913.
- Orford, Levett and Benefactors. Two annual Masses.
- Blount Family of Cleobury. Canon Kelly knows nothing about these, nor do I. 20 to be said.

SECTION V

The De Montfort Era 1967 - 1989

Surprisingly, Father Dunphy was replaced by four priests. They came from a seminary at Church Stretton which was closing. Fr. Madden served Cleobury Mortimer, Fr. Wilson, Craven Arms and Plowden, both part of our parish, with Fr. Cowen. And Fr. McAlinden became our parish priest. Sadly, St. Andrews (*Craven Arms*) is now closed and, after the departure of the de Montfort Fathers, St. Walburga's (*Plowden*) is now served from St. Milburga's (*Church Stretton*). Following the move of Fr. Dunphy to Winsford, the Franciscans were also approached but declined the offer of the district.

The Church Stretton property was not sold until the end of 1971, when it realised £13,000, £7,000 short of the price that the De Montfort Fathers had paid for it in 1947. Despite the lack of interest by would-be purchasers, in January 1968 the Provincial concluded that few, if any, of the Order were in favour of transferring the novitiate there. It would be far too big, and consequently discouraging, for the small numbers that they could reasonably foresee in the future.

Father Cyril Madden served Cleobury Mortimer from June 1968 to August 1973, when he left to start a new Montfortian foundation in Brisbane, Australia.

Father Lawrence Handley was initially responsible for Craven Arms and Plowden for four years. He was then succeeded by Father Will Connolly who stayed at the convent at Acton Burnell and was ferried by parishioners to the churches at Craven Arms and Plowden. History does not relate whether he learnt to drive before he became seriously ill and, within the year, went to Liverpool to convalesce.

Father Philip Wilson was confirmed as Assistant Priest at St. Peter's in August 1973.

Father Harold Cowen eventually left the area in March 1980 to take up a post at the English College in Rome.

From the Diocesan Archives Box 1

The Very Reverend Canon T. Welch, V.F.,
The Cathedral House, Belmont, Shrewsbury, Shrops.

25th October 1967

My dear Dean, Ludlow, Mawley & Plowden

The parishes of Ludlow, Mawley & Plowden have been committed to the Montfort Fathers as from midday on Wednesday, November 8th 1967. The Parish priest will be Father Francis McAlinden, S.M.M. He will take possession of the parish in my presence on Friday, November 17th 1967...

The curate will be Father Lawrence Handley, S.M.M.

With every good wish and a blessing.

Yours devotedly in Christ,

(*William Grasar*) Bishop of Shrewsbury.

From the Diocesan Archives Box 1

Montfort House,
Blundell Sands,
Liverpool 23.
November 25th 1967

My Lord Bishop,

I want to thank you most sincerely for all you did last week to make the ceremony of our taking over the Ludlow district so pleasant and memorable...

As I told you, I very much hope and pray that everything will go well in all the area for which we are now responsible. And I should like to assure Your Lordship that if there is anything that dissatisfies you there or anything further you wish us to do, I shall be glad to carry out all your wishes...

Yours gratefully in J & M,

Wilfred Jukka S.M.M.

In writing to his confreres on this occasion, Father Wilfred Jukka, the De Montfort Provincial, somewhat equivocally pointed out that their purpose in taking on some parishes was not because they were abandoning the ideal of home and foreign missions but mainly to have alternative work to offer to those for whom it seemed necessary.

In January 1972, both Father McAlinden and Father Madden described the state of play in the Ludlow area.

Fr. McAlinden: Although our parish at Ludlow covers an area of many square miles, our total Catholic population only amounts to about 320 people, with an average Mass attendance of about a third. Pastoral work here has its problems. The fewness of Catholics here resulted in all fourteen marriages of 1971 being mixed. And some adults, in fact, had not made their First Communion. During the year, we had six baptisms. Unfortunately, not all of the parents were practising Catholics. So the parish is really a missionary one, with still much of a pioneering nature about it.

The parish takes in one General Hospital, one Geriatric Hospital, and a County Home for old people. In all three, the staff is very helpful and co-operative.

Co-operation between the Churches is very good in this area. There is a Ludlow and District Council of Churches, and we take part in ecumenical activities as the occasion presents itself.

As regards finances, a small number of parishioners are exceedingly generous, and a great deal of help is also received from deeds of covenant. In addition, we have our usual quota of weekly Bingo and rummage sales, and our annual Christmas Fair has just realised a surprising £340.

As might be expected in such a large church, the heating costs are very heavy. Since the S.M.M. took over the house, the heating has been extended from the church to the house.

Finally, a note on our housekeeper, Miss Winnie Jones, who retired a few months ago. Unfortunately, she fell ill soon after leaving us and has been in the Royal Shropshire Infirmary ever since. Since then, we have been struggling without any help (*Still, Fr. Madden, according to the Provincial, made an excellent scouse!*) but, at long last, we have secured the services of a local lady, who comes in for a few hours each day, cooks the main meal and leaves something prepared for the evening.

Fr. Madden: Like the former British Empire, Ludlow parish has its far-flung outposts. Two of these are Middleton and Cleobury Mortimer. The former might just qualify for the description 'hamlet' though that is doing some violence to the meaning of the word. It lies fourteen miles from Ludlow. Mass attendance there is about a dozen. After that, your South Shropshire missionary has a veritable cross-country drive of thirteen miles, which will bring him to Cleobury for the 10.15 Mass. Like Middleton, Cleobury has S.M.M. associations which date back to January 1948...

Gone is the Blount family chapel. It passed into non-Catholic hands and our present church was built with substantial help from the late Sir Walter. It has simple proportions; not the 'orange-box style', as a former resident chaplain fervently hoped when he sent me a helpful cheque of £5 in 1960. Today, Mass attendance is round about the 50 mark for the local Catholics, though nowadays the motor car makes 'local' a somewhat relative term.

No one in his senses could foresee any development in the coming years for Cleobury Mortimer. So it will be unlikely for some years that the town will have a resident Catholic priest. As things are at present, Cleobury is not financially viable, and Middleton is like one of those helpful junior partners. The consolation for the Catholics in having their own church in the town is inseparable from the chilling reality of a church in debt. But things are moving in the right direction.

De Montfort visitors to the Ludlow area, during this time, had mixed experiences and reactions. Father Wilfred Jukka's successor as Provincial spent some pleasant days in the quiet of the Shropshire countryside whilst on supply in 1977. Four years earlier, however, one of his colleagues was not so fortunate, witness this account.

During Fr. Connolly's absence from Acton Burnell, a Father from Liverpool has been going regularly to Craven Arms and Plowden for Sunday Mass. One Sunday morning in December, Fr. Lydiate, on his way to the first Mass, skidded on some ice and finished up in a hedge just past Church Stretton. His car was beyond repair, but he himself emerged with only a badly cut hand. After having it seen by a doctor, he went on to say two Parish Masses and the third one in the Convent.

Bleak, too, seems to have been the impression formed by De Montfort students from Highgate engaged in apostolic work in Cleobury Mortimer under the aegis of Fr. Wilson in August 1976: "It is through the love of Christ that these people have faith and it is by the work of tireless apostles that the seed has begun to germinate. But in an area of 400 (sic) square miles served by two priests, the harvest is too great for the labourers."

That was one perspective. That their ministry did not pass unnoticed is evident from the following account.

Civic Recognition (Source: Barbara Handy)

To mark the year of the Queen's Silver Jubilee, 1977, the Town Council invited nominations for awards to twenty-five people who had made a marked difference to Ludlow life. Father MacAlinden in his last days at St. Peter's was included in the honour. It was received by Fr. Wilson on his behalf at the ceremony as Fr. Mac had already moved to Romsey by the presentation date. This was an indication of the high esteem in which the friendly but modest priest was held by the people of Ludlow.

Members of the original Parish Council which met for the first time on July 17th 1978.

President: Father Philip Wilson
 Chairman: Paul McLean
 Secretary: Leonard Schwarz
 Members: Margaret Fowler-Wright, Barbara Handy, Eta Lonergan, Peter Moore, Ray Sykes, Gordon Wilson.

There were also three members from St. Elizabeth's, Cleobury Mortimer, one from St. Andrew's, Craven Arms, and one from St. Walburga's, Plowden. All four congregations functioned together until Sunday, September 2nd, 1979, when St. Andrew's and St. Walburga's were transferred to St. Milburga's, Church Stretton, following the departure of the Curate, Father Harold Cowen, to Rome, thus ending the involvement of the De Montfort Fathers with Plowden and Craven Arms after thirty years.

These developments were foreshadowed in the following melancholy observations in January 1979 by Father Frederick Matthews, the current De Montfort Provincial.

As more confreres have to retire actually or virtually, it will mean the closing down of residences and especially of certain parishes. Each case will have to be examined carefully and with consultation, but what is a sure fact is that we do not have any replacements, either here at home or in the missions, for certain posts which become vacant... An example of what I speak about comes to my mind. On July 10th, Fr. Harold Cowen woke up and discovered that he had suddenly lost the sight of his left eye. When he had visited the doctor and a specialist, he was told that his condition was incurable. There is a lot of driving to be done between the parish and the other two chapels-of-ease which he looks after. The winter can be severe and the roads dangerous because of ice and fog. We did not know how he would manage in the dark. If Fr. Cowen has to leave Ludlow, who would replace him? We would have to consider another solution.

Availability of clergy apart, at this time, the following **innovations** took place:

- Offertory processions.
- The congregation offering one another the Sign of Peace.
- Readers for lessons and bidding prayers. (In 1979, however, there was concern because "Apparently, we are not obeying Rome by having women reading from the pulpit.")
- A rota for Welcomers.
- Modernised surplices for servers.

The possibility of Holy Communion in Both Kinds and of the involvement of Special Ministers was broached for the first time in 1979 but only within the confines of the Parish Council.

On Friday, March 2nd, 1979, the **St. Vincent de Paul Society** was established at St. Peter's. Parish finances had been put on a more regular footing by the introduction of **planned giving envelopes and covenants**, despite a fair amount of confusion and some overt disapproval. As a result, the average weekly collection rose from £52 to £75, which was just about enough to pay for running expenses.

On Good Friday, 1979, an **interdenominational reading of the Passion** took place on the steps of the Buttercross. St. Peter's, however, did not come to the forefront of the Christian Unity movement until 1981, when Father Wilson was elected Chairman of the **Ludlow Council of Churches**.

One Tuesday evening in May 1979, the Parish Priest was delayed in going to Cleobury Mortimer to offer Holy Mass. The congregation waited expectantly, when suddenly a stentorian female voice rang out: "Right, then! The Joyful Mysteries!" and straightaway led and organised a devout recitation of the Rosary.

Father Frederick Matthews came down from Liverpool to pay a further visit to Ludlow on March 23rd, 1981. This was in honour of the Silver Jubilee of the priesthood of Father Philip Wilson. Besides the De Montfort Provincial, present were Fathers F.McAlinden, P.McKeever, H.Cowen, C.Marshall, C.O'Donnell and Brother Louis Marie. There were also three diocesan priests from neighbouring parishes. There was a hotel lunch provided for the priests and Brother, and this allowed an intimacy and a freedom to reminisce about old times and former incidents. After a rest in the afternoon, they prepared for the Jubilee Mass at 7 p.m. There was a full church and the choir sang well. There were about twelve concelebrants. Fr. Wilson had asked for a homily on the priesthood without any personal mention of himself, and that is what the Provincial gave, although the parishioners could see him reflected in it. At the reception which followed, Fr. Wilson was presented with a new typewriter (*A controversy had arisen within the Order over whether anyone was allowed to own a colour television!*) and a house Mass kit. He was also presented with a cheque in the name of the Province and thanked for all that he had been as much as for all that he had done.

In June 1982, two coaches from St. Peter's went to Coventry to witness Pope John Paul II celebrate Mass during his **Papal Visit** to the United Kingdom during the Falklands Conflict.

Such highlights apart, life went on as normal:

He could sell sand to the Arabs! (Source: Ann Huband)

Before the days of car boot sales, one of the ways to raise money was by having a rummage sale. One of ours was held in the Women's Centre in town. All the tables were set up, piled high with things given by parishioners and friends. I was put in a corner spot by Bernard Uffindell. The sale went well and the money rolled in but things weren't going quick enough for Bernard so he started to convince customers that they really needed certain items. Now my imagination is quite good but whatever Doreen Martin could do with a case with only one lock is even beyond me; and the large lady would never get into that skinny skirt and the tall gentleman would never wear those trousers with short legs. Bernard was in his element and congratulated himself on getting rid of things as it was less to pack up. Mind you, Sandra Preece, aged about nine, I thought, looked very pretty in a small fluffy hat that must have belonged to a little old lady. She wore it home and was quite upset when mum, Margaret, insisted that she take it off and put it in the bin.

Everything was ready for the summer fete. Cakes were made, tombola prizes were numbered. The fete was to be held, as usual, on the church lawns. Unfortunately, that Sunday morning, it rained and it rained and it rained. After Mass, a quick decision had to be made. We couldn't postpone: the posters were out and what about the cakes? Father Philip said that we could use the house, the lounge and the church. Everything moved up a gear. Skates were on. Umbrellas were opened and old carpets appeared to cover the floors; there were boxes for wet brollies, anything that we could think of, and we all prayed. The fete went ahead. The tombola was held in the then dining room. The gift stall was in what is now the sacristy. Stalls were everywhere. The people came and we raised money. When it was all over, everyone helped to clean up and the presbytery was as clean as when we started.

The Night of the Flood at St. Peter's (Source: Elio Franchi)

We now have an effective system of electric heaters in St. Peter's (worshippers have been seen taking off their coats during Mass) but until 1981 we had an old central heating system with radiators and pipes running all round the church. It did not always work very well, especially if the weather was very cold. One bitterly cold and frosty evening early in 1981, a minor disaster struck when the radiator pipes burst, flooding the church floor with black, oily water. Word of what had happened went round very quickly, and parishioners who lived nearest or had transport rushed up to the church with mops and buckets, to try and clear up the mess. This took a long time and the floor looked a sorry sight! It was sad to think that, only a few days earlier, several volunteer cleaners had spent the day waxing and polishing it. The floor was later re-stained and varnished, avoiding the need for such heavy work in future.

The **first re-ordering of the church** started in September 1982, when the old oil-fired central heating system was removed. The electrical installations had been declared unsafe and were put right before the current overhead electric heaters were fitted. At the same time, a glass partition was erected at the back of the church between the repository and the rear pews. Three years earlier, worries over the rising cost of fuel (*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose!*) led to the suggestions that solar panels should be installed in the roof and that the rear section of the church should be covered over in order to create a first floor. This would cut down on heat loss and allow space for a church hall or a games area. The subsequent great frost, during which several radiators burst, concentrated minds on a much more practical heating solution but the Parish had to wait until 1995 before it had adequate premises for all its meetings and activities. The structural alterations included constructing within the existing church a new sacristy with confessional; a repository with a lending library and a screen to provide an entrance meeting area distinct from the main body of the church. In such a climate, the idea of a **Maintenance Team** with direct responsibility for both church and grounds evolved shortly after the formation of the Parish Council.

In the days before the hall was built, the house was used for all sorts of things. After Wednesday evening Mass, there were adult learning classes when we discussed and discovered more about our faith. At one Mass, Rupert Baldcock read about Shadrach etc. Unfortunately, Rupert had difficulties pronouncing R’s and was not very happy with himself afterwards and suggested that they should all have been thrown into the “fiawee fawness.” The next time it was read, Father Philip said that, yes, he remembered Rupert reading but it was read better this time. Rupert said that he was pleased that he didn’t have to go through all that again! Other uses were for SVP meetings, children’s instruction, when there were up to six classes of about eight children, and any excuse for a social gathering, Saint Patrick’s night being a favourite. As usual, parishioners brought the refreshments, put them on the table and we all shared. One time, we had a quiz, with Maureen and Raymond Sykes, during which we all agreed that every question should be answered. If we didn’t know the answer, we thought of the most ridiculous thing we could. It’s amazing how often ‘Crossroads’ appeared.

Father Hogan, at one time, had been the Superior at the Church Stretton seminary for five years and was closely associated with St. Peter's and St. Elizabeth's for another nine. He went on to play a large part in the parish of Our Lady of the Assumption, Gateacre, Liverpool, which was served by the de Montfort Order.

Having looked after the Parish during the interregnum, he quoted these lines, source unknown:

The Perfect Priest

If the priest preaches over ten minutes, he's too long-winded;
if his sermon's short, he's too easy going.

If the parish funds are low, he's a bad businessmen;
if he mentions money, he's grasping.

If he visits his parishioners, he's nosy;
if he doesn't, he's snobbish.

If he has fetes and festivals, he's bleeding the people;
if he doesn't, the parish is lacking in social life.

If he takes time in Confession, he's too slow;
if he doesn't, he's not a good confessor.

If he starts Mass on the minute, his watch is fast;
if he's a bit late, he's holding up the congregation.

If he decorates the church, he's spending too much money;
if he doesn't, he's letting it run down.

If he's too young, he's not experienced;
if he's too old, he should retire.

If he dies, there will never be his equal again!

Who ate all the bananas? (Source: Ann Huband)

Father Philip Wilson did all the shopping for the presbytery. When his mother lived there, she was very fond of a banana. Unfortunately, so was Father Dan Hogan, but Father Philip was not aware of this. When Mrs. Wilson asked for one, they were missing. Putting on his Sherlock Holmes' hat, Father Philip soon found out where they were going – into Father Dan!!! To avoid any confrontation, Father Philip started to hide the bananas, so that his mother could have one when needed. He had to find different hiding places, as Father Dan, too, was a very good detective and was seen to be eating bananas when the fruit bowl had been empty for a few days.

1989 – 1998 FATHER PAUL SIDOLI

By the time Father Sidoli arrived, the church roof was showing signs of serious decay. Much algae growth had appeared on the inside of the church, particularly in the dome with its dove motif. It was pointless even to consider re-decoration until the root cause of the problem had been identified and rectified.

A building committee decided to re-roof with a high-quality felt roofing specification. At one stage, it appeared that the roof was much worse than it proved to be. The reinforcing rods had rusted badly in certain areas and in doing so had cracked the concrete. However, on closer inspection, the contractors reported that only minor damage had occurred so far. The problem had been caught in time.

The roof repairs were carried out by Blake & Edwards of Hereford and the total re-decoration of the interior was done by Northfield Construction of Birmingham. As the last re-felting and re-decoration had been done 30 years previously, it was hoped that the present renovation would last well into the new millennium.

An enormous amount of scaffolding was needed, inside and outside, so that no services could be held in the church whilst work was going on. Fortunately, the Parish had the utmost co-operation from Anglican St. John's, and everyone will always be extremely grateful to the Rev. Prebendary John Baulch and his parishioners for so generously allowing the Parish to worship on their premises.

The appeal for funds was launched in April 1990 by the Mayor of Ludlow and the Town Council itself made a significant contribution of £500. Within the Parish, the 'Copper Hunt' boxes proved to be one of the most successful fund-raising ventures. When work began, the Parish had raised as much as £40,000 while the Diocese agreed to provide an interest-free loan of also £40,000. In the event, the total cost reached £150,000 but the Parish was able to settle the bills in good time. Hence, it was to everyone's credit that the church was re-opened on May 30th 1993 in all its new-found glory. The challenge of raising these funds, daunting though it was, helped foster a remarkably good community spirit, and St. Peter's was much indebted to Father Sidoli for so cheerfully steering the congregation through this challenging experience.

Reminiscences of Brenda Ellis (III)

Jane Taylor and myself cleaned the stained glass above the High Altar from inside while Chris Henry and family cleaned the outside. Jane and I also cleaned the Rose Window until we were told to stop because it was too dangerous. Of course, we had finished cleaning by then.

The Catherine of Aragon vestment also needed repairing and Betty Smith and the late Monica Meek spent many hours working on it.

It was Father Sidoli who asked Monica Meek to repair the Catherine of Aragon chasuble. Monica was an excellent seamstress. I was roped in under Monica's supervision. She was a very exacting taskmaster. We worked on the floor of the front bedroom at the Presbytery. Re-lining the chasuble was a headache because it was almost impossible to handle, owing to the weight of the vestment. When we replaced the old but not original braid, the difficulties of getting our needles through the cloth of gold were many. Modern needles are just not strong enough. We went through a good many, to say nothing of sore finger-ends. Aided by some very crisp language from both Monica and myself, we finished the job.

Of course, I have memories of innumerable church fetes, the summer ones held outside. The weather was not always kind. One year, Monica, Elizabeth Keville and myself ran a plant stall that was washed away. I reached home with my shoes full of water and wet to the skin. It can be hard work raising money!

An extended Holy Week (Source: Ann Huband)

Father Philip (Wilson) used to say that if you could survive Holy Week, you could survive anything. From Monday to Wednesday, there was Mass at 7.00 p.m. so, for those who didn't get home till after 6.00 p.m., it was late and very quick meals. On Maundy Thursday, after the Mass, we had a shared meal, sandwiches, hot -cross buns, cakes and wine, then back to the 'Watching'. We used to 'watch' till midnight then. We have always 'done' the last hour. One year, Father Paul Sidoli and Ada, his housekeeper, were in church when we arrived. Father Paul then went into the house. The three of us continued with our prayers till one of us noticed it was midnight. We waited another five minutes, then, Ada went to find Father. She found him asleep in the chair! (I said it was a difficult week.) After our evening prayers and the removal of the Blessed Sacrament, it was almost 12.30 a.m. when we got home.

An extra spiritual dimension was given to the Parish when, in September 1990, the **Sisters of St. Mary of Namur** moved from Lowestoft to Ludlow, where they resided until 2004. Always unobtrusive, they soon became active in many spheres. In particular, Holy Hour at Livesey Road was a source of inspiration while all denominations greatly appreciated their warmth and gift for friendship.

The Feast Day of the **Blessed Edward Campion**, beatified on December 15th 1929 with other Shropshire and Cheshire martyrs, was celebrated for the first time at St. Peter's on September 30th 1990, with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

On July 3rd 1993, the Feast of St. Thomas the Apostle, the only ordination ever held so far at St. Peter's took place under the auspices of Bishop Joseph Gray. The ordinand in question was **Julian Shurgold**. He had studied and trained at the Beda College in Rome and also at the Dominican University from which he received a degree in Sacred Theology. Both his parents were head teachers who moved to Ludlow after Julian's father retired from Our Lady's School, Hereford. His Ordination Mass was concelebrated by the Bishop, Fr. Paul Sidoli and thirty other priests. Julian, after having made his solemn vows, had the laying-on of hands during the prayer of consecration from all the priests present. He is currently Parish Priest of

the Holy Family Church, Sutton Green, in the Diocese of Southwark, while he is a frequent contributor via the internet to the national Catholic and secular press.

Father Anthony Cooke (1992 – 2008)

Fr. Anthony Cooke came to Ludlow in September 1992, on his retirement from the Diocese of Westminster. He had spent holidays in Hereford and Shropshire and liked the Marches generally. The right house at the right price came up in Ludlow, and he was happy to settle here.

Father Sidoli greeted his arrival with some relief, as it coincided with Father Dan Hogan's return to his Order, which left Father Paul on his own. Fr. Cooke helped out with all and anything he was asked to do in the parish. This included, for years, doing the Triduum in Cleobury Mortimer. He covered for clerical holidays here and, at first in some other parishes, until he found he had enough to do in Ludlow! By the time Father Robinson arrived, Fr. Cooke was beginning to feel his age but he still helped out and it was not until the last few years of his life that he stopped going regularly to say Sunday Mass at Cleobury, and sharing the work of the Triduum with Fr. Robinson in Ludlow.

A firm believer in ecumenism, Fr. Cooke was a weekly attender at the "Prayers for Peace" at St. Lawrence's, which began after 9/11 and continued for 4/5 years. He also took part in various services at other churches, and when St. Peter's was closed for renovation, Fr. Cooke celebrated the first Mass in St. Lawrence's since the Reformation, by the kind permission of the Rector.

Fr. Cooke was also chaplain to the Newman Association, based in Church Stretton, until it closed down. He spent a large part of his time reading and listening to his collection of classical recordings. He read widely in preparation for his sermons, on which he expended a great deal of time. He enjoyed doing this, as he said he had never, as a busy parish priest, been able to spare enough time to do it to his own satisfaction.

In his personal life, he was a lover of railways, an interest he shared with Len Berry of happy memory. He also had a large collection of model railway equipment. Fr. Cooke loved travel. Until his retirement he had not been in a position to go further than the British Isles apart from Lourdes and Rome in his youth but in his retirement he visited the U. S. several times. He loved America, especially New York and the South West. Since 9/11 he had confined himself to Europe, visiting Rome twice, and being a frequent visitor to the Irish Republic. He was a keen gardener.

When he died some people who had come to the parish since his arrival seemed quite surprised to find that Fr. Cooke was not one of the parish clergy! He had become very much a part of St. Peter's and St Elizabeth's, and that was exactly as he would have wished (although he always retained his loyalty and devotion to the Diocese of Westminster.)

In 2002, modern technology was invoked to introduce **programmable music** to be played whenever an organist was absent. A wide variety of hymns was recorded on disk to be played via the digital organ. These disks proved invaluable when the Parish found itself without a permanent organist in June 2003 and have been augmented ever since. All the same, there is no substitute for the real thing and we have very much appreciated the appearance of visiting organists on numerous special occasions.

A most difficult decision was involved in the demise of the **8 a.m. Sunday Mass**. Week in, week out, sun, rain or snow, the Parish Priest had gone from this to celebrate Mass at St. Elizabeth's, Cleobury Mortimer, at 9.15 a.m. before returning to Ludlow for the main celebration at 11 a.m. The previous evening, he had already officiated at the 6 p.m. Saturday Mass. It was only a matter of time before this formidable schedule proved to be unsustainable.

The development, however, that dominated 2002 – 2003 was **the Parish Project**. In view of the need for the laity to take more of a lead in every sphere, because of the growing shortage of Parish Priests, the Diocese invited each parish to examine its past history, assess its current role and consider its future mission. This process was lengthy and culminated in a Parish Day on June 8th 2003, which was attended by thirty parishioners after a special Mass. In the preceding months, 'The Story of Our Parish' was produced in booklet form, after featuring in an exhibition based on material from a wide variety of sources. The debt to it owed by this present account is enormous. 'The Story of Our Parish' was complemented by 'Our Parish Today', a display that drew attention to well over twenty Parish organisations and activities. It survives, in essence, in the red information folder at the back of the church that serves as a Parish directory. The Day itself started with an analysis of the 'Joys and Sorrows' questionnaire that addressed issues within the Parish and locality. Naturally, some of the responses were controversial or unrepresentative, while some were cancelled out by others, but most provided a platform for constructive discussion and led to the proposed establishment of six Working Groups. These were to concern themselves with the Liturgy; Faith Development; Contacts with Parishioners; Young People and Parents; Social Action; Social Activities. In some instances, these have indeed gone from strength to strength along the lines suggested by the Parish Project; in other cases, the Parish has preferred to set about matters on an ad hoc basis, as in the past.

What parishioners wrote in the 'Joys and Sorrows' questionnaire about the locality was inevitably coloured by their own experiences at home, at work and whilst on the **church premises**. The latter seemed for a while increasingly under threat with a succession of minor break-ins, acts of vandalism, confrontations – some verbal, as in the row over the 'Satanic Gates', with their inverted crosses, some physical as when the Parish Priest was assaulted by a frustrated skateboarder- and misuse of the church steps, paths and grounds. Recently, however, the opening of a Youth Centre on Lower Galdeford and a long-overdue skate park on Wheeler Road has, to some extent, made life easier. Moreover, at the same time, more and more use has been made by the local community of the Parish Centre. Nowadays, people go there, for example, to vote, to attempt to lose weight, to spin, to play chess, whist or table tennis, to pick up gardening tips or to discuss their personal problems. For a time, they even donated blood there.

In a bid to raise the profile of St. Peter's, the **Parish website** was set up during the course of 2003 by Chris Oliver. People who had recently come into the area were also catered for by a Welcome Pack which was prepared and distributed in conjunction with Churches Together Around Ludlow. Leaflets, containing information about St. Peter's were circulated among the hotels and guest houses in the neighbourhood for the use of tourists. This approach was subsequently adopted by all the other churches.

It was about this time that most members of the congregation became aware of the existence of the **Service of Word and Communion** to be taken by a Special Eucharistic Minister in the absence of the priest. Such a rite had been practised as a matter of course by the nuns at the Convent but was the exception rather than the rule for as long as Father Cooke was generally available when Father Robinson was away. The nuns, though, were soon to leave Livesey Road.

'End of an era as nuns leave town.' (From the 'Ludlow Journal' on September 3rd 2004)

Ministers from several churches will lead a special service to mark the end of an era in Ludlow this weekend, as the town's convent closes and the last of the nuns leaves.

Since 1991 the sisters of Mary have been based in their convent in Ludlow, which has been a house in one of the town's popular residential streets. Due to ill health and falling numbers, the convent has been sold and the last two nuns are relocating to Liverpool where they will join others of their order.

In the years since 1991 a team of three nuns has been in town. Their main responsibility has been to give hospitality to other nuns needing a break from work in the inner cities or from missions. But they also helped all the town's churches. They had taken services, run prayer groups, made visits to families and helped with the education of children.

The team was now down to two and not viable. Sister Patricia, who has been in Ludlow since 1991, and Sister Gabriel were moving to Liverpool where they would continue their work.

"We are devastated that they are going. They are such stalwarts of the parish," said Mrs. Barbara Handy.

The nuns' love of Ludlow will be reflected in a poetry reading during the service, specially chosen for the occasion. It is called *Ludlow Regained*, written by Violet O'Connor, wife of Armel O'Connor, a music teacher at the former Grammar School.

The necessity of pooling scarce resources eventually led to Bishop Noble's initiative to create **Local Pastoral Areas**, in 2007, throughout the Diocese. Hence, St. Peter's, Ludlow, St. Elizabeth's, Cleobury Mortimer, St. Milburga's, Church Stretton, and St. Walburga's, Plowden, have drawn closer, though, alas, not geographically, in a number of spheres such as meetings with the Bishop, pilgrimages, special Masses, exchange of newsletters and social occasions like skittles matches. As can be seen from earlier pages, a great deal of shared history lies behind this particular development. In this regard, the Parish is especially grateful to Father Donlon, former Parish Priest of St. Milburga's, for coming out of retirement to celebrate Sunday Mass whenever Father Robinson is away and also, since September 2008, for making the **Tridentine Mass** available on a regular basis.

Squadron Leader B. A. "Jimmy" James, MC, survivor of the Great Escape from Stalag Luft III, was born on April 17, 1915. He died on January 18, 2008, aged 92

Two years later, a memorial plaque was put up in the church to commemorate a life devoted to the cause of individual freedom.

Centenary at Ludlow (From the February 2009 issue of the 'Shrewsbury Voice')

St Peter's of Ludlow have spent much of the year celebrating their 100th Birthday.

The first occasion was a Mass, enriched by Bishop Brian's presence, followed by a party on January 26th to mark the first Parish Mass celebrated on that date in 1908 by Fr. Charles Fisher, the founding Parish Priest.

In May they were joined by members of their Pastoral Area for a Mass and supper.

For the patronal feast day in June, a Barbecue lunch followed the Sunday Mass. This was attended by old friends and parishioners from far and wide.

Very recently, the celebratory year has drawn to a close with an 'At Home' Service, to which local councillors and members of 'Churches Together around Ludlow' were invited. A presentation of slides, interspersed with readings and hymns, portrayed the history and progression of St. Peter's Ludlow and its hopes for the future. The evening closed with a feast in the Parish Centre and the cutting of a Centenary cake by the present Parish Priest, Fr. Jim Robinson.

St. Peter's was one of the first parishes in the Diocese to be visited by Coadjutor **Bishop Mark Davies** in May 2010 as he prepared to take over from Bishop Brian Noble. At both weekend Masses, he made sure that he had a word with everyone and seemed well pleased with their responses.

Another visitor at this time was **Father Giampiero Melaragni** in preparation for his missionary work in India. The conviction with which he expressed his faith, his gallant battles with the complexities of English pronunciation and the verve of his table tennis endeared him to all who encountered him.

In common with the whole Catholic community of the United Kingdom, the Parish followed closely the **Papal Visit** of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI in September 2010 and felt that it far exceeded all expectations. His portrait now greets everyone as they enter the church. It is hoped that the abiding legacy of 'Heart Speaks unto Heart' will be shared by every denomination in the area.

Father Jim Robinson's **Golden Jubilee** celebrations in October 2010 were followed by visits to both Italy and the Holy Land. These provided plenty of inspirational material for subsequent homilies and presentations.

Vandalism once again reared its ugly head when the Rose Window was badly damaged by a ball that could only have been directed at it with considerable force and accuracy. The treatment of the church grounds by the general public remains an issue that has yet to be resolved.

Considerable preparation went into the introduction of the **New Roman Missal**. It is about to bear fruit.

The **Thanksgiving Mass** on August 23rd 2011 for Father Jim Robinson's thirteen years in the Parish attracted Catholics and non-Catholics, lay and clergy, from near and far. At the finger buffet that followed, among the tributes paid to Father Jim it was observed that he belonged to that select band of whom it could be said without hesitation that one could see the God whom they served every time one came across them. Most fittingly, he had worn the Catherine of Aragon chasuble whilst celebrating the Mass.

And so,

Time present and time past,

Are both perhaps present in time future,

And time future contained in time past. (Source: T.S.Eliot: 'Burnt Norton')