

STELLA MARIS



SOUVENIR ALBUM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is dedicated to all parish priests especially those who have ministered at Lowestoft and much of the information presented in the story has been gained from their writings from parish records, church bulletins, newspapers and magazines:

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| Geoffrey Brennan | 1881 – 1884 |
| Alexander George Scott | 1884 – 1918 |
| Robert Greenwood Allan | 1918 – 1941 |
| Thomas Kemp Phillips | 1941 – 1945 |
| Arthur Anthony Tomlinson | 1945 – 1982 |
| Anthony Edward Sketch | 1982 – |

Their story as Fathers of the parish family is one of dedicated service and is reflected by the lives of their many assistants and parishioners in their care. Priests who assisted Fr. Tomlinson were: Frs. Guimard 1946, Eric Phillips '46, Alfred Bull '46-'47, Frank Hacon '47-'51, Ward '51-'52, Styles '53, Ronan '54, Anthony Griffiths '55-'57, James Sloan '57-'61, George Grace '61-'65, Stephen Reith '65, James Wallace '65-'67, Neville McClement '67-'69, Graham Adams '69-'71, Joseph Teeling '71-'78, Thomas Murray '78, Stephen Raynor '78-'82 and Peter Cansdale. Father Sketch has been assisted by Peter Cansdale '82-'90, Adrian Gates '90-'92 and James Caulfield 1992.

It has been my aim to include as many names as possible in this edition to recognise the connection between the parish and the person; that we are the parish family and this is our home. My apologies if your name is omitted. Please accept that it is not intentional but merely due to lack of time, resources, and limitations of my own experience and memory. The album will assist in our greatest venture to raise money for the Church Tower fund, which aims to raise close on six figures and at present stands at £20,000. We who love our church all have the responsibility to share in this, just as in times past all parishioners made their contributions - and what a heritage we have to preserve!

My thanks to all contributors to the previous album produced in 1986 to mark the opening of the new Stella Maris Hall and to those new contributors mentioned by name in the present text; to Fr. Tomlinson for checking details of restoration, to Fr. Sketch and Fr. Caulfield for allowing me access to the parish registers and to Janet Long for administrative assistance in helping me update the history. Finally a big vote of thanks to all the listed personal subscribers who, by sponsoring this second edition, have contributed to ensure its success as a fundraiser for the Church.

C.J.B.

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First published 1992 by Christopher J. Brooks
356 London Road South, Lowestoft, Suffolk.

Typeset by Graphics Matter Ltd.
26 Harvest Drive, Lowestoft, Suffolk.

Printed in England by Richardson Printing
Colville Works, Colville Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk

Front Cover –
Our Lady Star of the Sea Church 1902



December 1992

Lowestoft Church

FOREWORD

Normally 'history looks backwards', as it were. This last year, however, things seem to have been that bit different. 1992 saw the 90th anniversary of the opening of our beautiful church, the 60th anniversary of the ordination of Father Tomlinson, the parish priest here from 1945 until 1982, and the 30th anniversary of my own ordination!

The size of our town and community has grown far beyond what would have been imagined when the Catholics of the town used to gather in the loft of the netstore for the celebration of Mass. Yet we still have among us parishioners who used to walk to Mass from the outlying villages. So the family of the parish has grown. Our family 'home', our church, now seems to bear more striking witness to the vitality of our Faith, Hope and Love. The commissioning of the work on our tower demanded great 'faith'; we 'hope' to pay off the £90,000 as soon as possible, ever trusting in the 'love' of our family as a whole and those visitors whom we are glad to welcome throughout the year. If the church went by seemingly unnoticed in the past, now it is resplendent in its former glory.

Somehow or other everything seemed to come together in an exciting way on Sunday 6th December 1992. Through the medium of television our welcome of visitors to share in our Sunday celebration of Mass reached out into the very homes of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, throughout most of the British Isles. I think it must have been the postman who first realised the extent of the impact, as the mail poured in aplenty! Yes, the Mass bore living witness to our Faith, Hope and Love of Jesus whose birth we are preparing to celebrate.

Our parish is very much a living family of old and young, rich and poor, sick and healthy, sinners and saints. Some of us value the family more, others less, yet we all belong and our church is our family home. If, in days of yore, our predecessors took a great pride both in their Faith and the church, so should we. Our inheritance is indeed one of great love. How we should rejoice in it and do our utmost to hand on such a treasure to those who will come after us.

Anthony E. Sketch



The restored church tower and facade – December 1992

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The main entrance of Our Lady Star of the Sea – December 1992



Church of Our Lady Star of the Sea, Gordon Road – December 1992

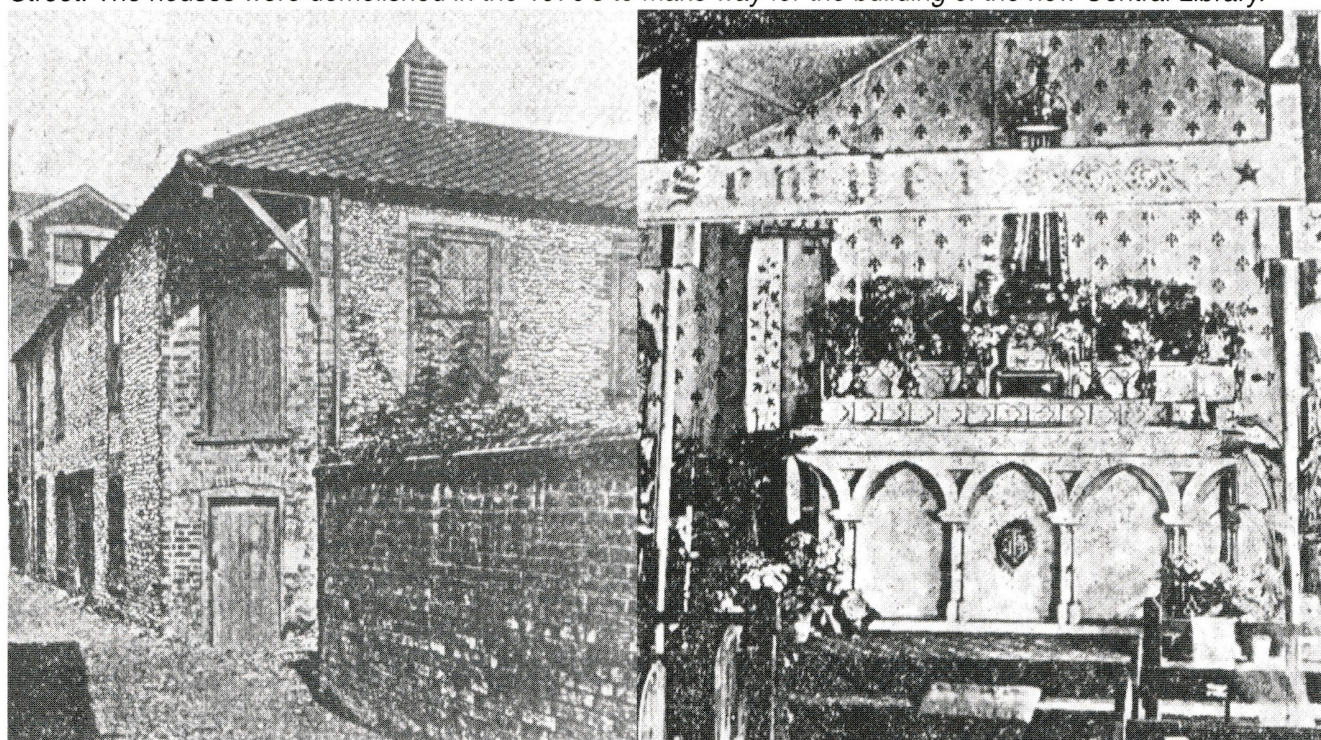
IN THE BEGINNING...

The Roman Catholic Hierarchy was restored in Britain in 1850 and it was in that year that the Diocese of Northampton was established. It was some 21 years after Catholics were emancipated and allowed to vote for the first time. Also in 1850 the Jesuits opened a church (St. Mary's) at Gt. Yarmouth but there were few, if any Catholics living at Lowestoft at that time. Later, Lowestoft was served by the Jesuit Fathers from Gt. Yarmouth who began a mission to its Suffolk neighbour in 1867 when Mass was celebrated in the Assembly Rooms now known as Crown Hall in Crown Street. After early setbacks there was an interval of six years before Mass was said regularly again in North Raglan Street, when the Jesuits hired a store near the Maconochie pickling plots, Raglan Road in 1873.

In 1878 the Jesuits moved to the "Armoury" in Commercial Road where a monthly Mass was conducted by Rev. F. Splaine, S.J. of Gt. Yarmouth, according to an advertisement in the local directory. On the strength of this early mission, the parish was formed and Father Geoffrey Brennan was appointed Apostolic Missionary, the first parish priest of Lowestoft, by the Bishop of Northampton on 24th. September 1881.

FR. GEOFFREY BRENNAN 1881-1884

Father Brennan secured a former carpenter's shop on the first floor of a typical Lowestoft netstore near the town centre to be used as the first regular chapel of the mission. It was situated at the rear of 1 Clemence Villas and he resided at 2 Clemence Villas, later renumbered 44 Clapham Road. It could be approached via the Prairie from London Road North or by a side opening from Clapham Road opposite the eastern end of Stanley Street. The houses were demolished in the 1970's to make way for the building of the new Central Library.



The Netstore and Carpenter's Shop Chapel, Clapham Road, Lowestoft, 1882-1902

Father Brennan held services at the netstore chapel at 11 am and 6 pm on Sundays and daily at 8 am according to the 1883 Kelly's Directory. At this time the number of parishioners numbered about 30 souls and, at the first administration of the Sacrament of Confirmation at Lowestoft by Bishop Arthur Riddell of Northampton, there were 10 confirmands. The names of confirmands and sponsors at Lowestoft through the ages are listed in Appendix 2. This information comes from the Parish Registers and also included in the appendices are the names of all those baptised, married or given a funeral rite at the church together with the year of occurrence.

FATHER ALEXANDER GEORGE SCOTT 1884 - 1918

Fr. Scott succeeded Father Brennan as Apostolic Missionary in 1884 and soon after his arrival placed this advertisement in the Lowestoft Journal of August 16th. 1884:

"ST. MARY'S (TEMPORARY) CATHOLIC CHURCH - Hours of Service (Sundays) Mass and Sermon 11. Benediction of Blessed Sacrament and Sermon, 6.30. Rev. Father SCOTT, Priest."

Father Scott began appealing for subscriptions and contributions so that a new church could be built in its own grounds and within a year a piece of land being developed by the new Gordon Road was secured in 1885 for £1600. According to the registers the parish chapel and succeeding new church was named Sancta Maria Stella Maris (St. Mary Star of the Sea), but Father Scott called his parish 'Our Lady Star of the Sea' as this Lowestoft Journal report indicates, and the name has stuck ever since:

"PRESENTATION - A handsome and massive timepiece in black marble and ormolu has been presented to the Rev. A. G. Scott, of the Roman Catholic Mission Chapel in the Clapham Road. The Rev. Father Scott has been but a short time in the town, but he has won the affection of his congregation and the respect of many outside his own particular sphere. On the close was a silver plate with the following inscription :- "Presented to the Rev. A. G. Scott by the congregation of Our Lady Star of the Sea, Lowestoft, as a token of their respect. October 23rd. 1885." With the clock was an address signed by subscribers."

Plans for a new church were drawn up by the Lowestoft architect, Mr. F.W. Richards, M.S.A. but could not be put into effect because of lack of funds. The appeal went nationwide through the medium of a letter to the editor of The Universe, the Catholic weekly newspaper as follows:

"OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA. To the editor of the Universe. Sir,- With your kind permission I venture to draw the attention of the Catholics of the United Kingdom to the new Lowestoft Mission. During my short missionary life here I have had every opportunity of seeing how much can be done for the honour and glory of Almighty God if the faithful will but assist me to erect a church under the patronage of Our Lady Star of the Sea. I have at present an "upper chamber", formerly used as a "carpenter's shop", in which the services are held. The inhabitants of Lowestoft number 20,000, and no church. My congregation, which is exceedingly small, is composed chiefly of converts, and it is my hope that ere long many others may be brought to the faith.

It is indeed a blessing to have always been a Catholic, and I appeal to those who have always possessed the treasure of the faith to assist me as a sign of their gratitude to Almighty God for so choice a blessing. To converts also I especially look for help. They indeed are indebted to Almighty God for having bestowed upon them a special mark of His love. This is my first appeal, and I trust that the Catholics of the United Kingdom will not hesitate to render me every possible assistance.

My bishop, the Right Rev. Dr. Riddell (Northampton), during the past year has secured two magnificent sites for church and schools, and it is with his lordship's approval I make this, my first appeal. Thanking you, dear sir, for your kindness towards my poor mission for inserting this letter, I beg to remain, very faithfully yours in Christ, ALEXANDER SCOTT. Catholic Church, Lowestoft, Feb. 2nd, 1886."

Subscriptions built up slowly but surely during the following years. One sum of money was donated by Miss Penley, a parishioner who had organised a grand concert at the Public Hall in February 1888. Although held on St. Valentine's night, attendance was good and controversial press publicity must have played a part in communicating the aims of the occasion. A Protestant Vicar noticed the names of Roman Catholics combined with those of Protestant Churchmen on the placard announcing the concert. After learning from Fr. Scott that the object was for the benefit of the Roman Catholic Chapel he wrote to the press expressing his hope that those who value Protestant truth will leave the Catholic Community to support their own Church. A further rash of letters of various shades of Protestant opinion, though mainly of charitable intent, ensued which had the effect of handsomely advertising the concert which was a great success and reported as the best held in Lowestoft for several years.

Then in 1899 a magnificent anonymous donation of £10,000 ensured the construction of a church matching the dreams of the parish priest. Plans were immediately redrawn and on the 23rd. August 1900, with the footings in place, the foundation stone was laid with due ceremony by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Riddell of Northampton accompanied by many priests of the Diocese.

The following is an extract from a report of 25th. August 1900 in the Lowestoft Journal:

"..Amongst the large gathering of the public were the Mayor (Councillor E.E. Johnson), Councillor A.G. Notley, A. Stebbings, E.F. Thain, E.C. Titcomb, and H.G. Jones; Messrs. C. Ward, Edwards, W.T. Balls and Austin Smith, Major Worswick, Commander Storey (H.M.S. Hearty), Lieut. Carter (H.M.S. Hearty). The foundation stone was inscribed as follows.

+ I. O. G. D. +
 Lapis Primarius
 A.D. X Kal. Sept.
 + MDCCCC +

(The initials signifying "In Omnia Gloria Dei." The date is according to the Roman Calendar.)

The water for sprinkling having been blessed by the Bishop, prayers were offered, and salt put in the form of a cross. The choir sang the psalm "Quam Dilecta Tabernacula" ("How lovely are thy tabernacles"), and during this the stone was sprinkled with water, by a branch of greenery. After further prayers the stone was again sprinkled, and the sign of the cross engraved on each face of the stone by the Bishop. Then the Litany of Saints was sung, and afterwards the stone was laid by the Bishop with a silver trowel. The Bishop and clergy then went in procession round the foundations, which were sprinkled with holy water.



Foundation Ceremony – Our Lady Star of the Sea Church – Gordon Road, Lowestoft – 1900

In a cavity beneath the stone was placed a bottle containing coins of the realm, a brief history of the temporary church, and a copy of the last issue of the "Lowestoft Journal". After the procession the hymn "Veni Creator" was sung and further prayers having been offered, the Bishop delivered a brief but eloquent address.

In the course of this he said that God had shown himself at various times. He fills the world with his presence; He is everywhere. In the time of Our Divine Lord every place where he went was sanctified by His presence. In God's own Christian Catholic Church it was His will that certain places should be enclosed, for His truth to be declared, and His mysteries to be dispensed. It was the presence of Jesus Christ that sanctified their churches and chapels, however humble they might be. So God would sanctify the place in which they were assembled. God had chosen the site Himself, and after all the prayers that had been offered, the place was sacred to Almighty God. The place on which they stood was Holy ground, by being dedicated as the place where the truth, the "Cathedra Veritatis" would be declared, and the sacraments administered. There would be the continual Presence, for Jesus Christ would dwell amongst them. It was this abiding Presence which made their churches Holy. When they came to that great day when the church would be opened, then would they say more than ever that the place was Holy.

Their first duty after praying to God, Our Lady and the Saints, was to pray for the person who had given the church, and who wished to remain anonymous. Might she be blessed and have eternal rest. In that place Divine Sacrifice was to be offered, and therefore they must pray that the Church might not be seized by the enemies of the Cross. Might it never be desecrated or desolated, and might the Sacrifice of the Mass be ever offered up. The Church would be dedicated to Our Lady Star of the Sea – Maris Stella, the Ocean Star. As they stood there close to the sea, they thought of the perils of the ocean; and they prayed to God to extend his helping hand to the poor mariners on the sea, and that Our Blessed Lady, the Mother of God, might give aid to the poor distressed mariner and bring him to a haven of rest. The Bishop then gave his blessing and the impressive ceremony ended..."

Building continued apace and within two years the church was opened on June 5th. 1902. This is from the report of the opening in the Lowestoft Journal of June 7th. 1902:

"One of the principal features of Lowestoft's progress in the past decade has been the building of places of worship; but it is safe to say that the most beautiful and striking of them all, both in its architectural and its internal appointments, is the handsome Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady Star of the Sea, in Gordon Road, which was opened on Thursday with stately and impressive ceremonial. It was in 1881 that a Roman Catholic Mission was commenced in Lowestoft, with the Rev. Father Brennan in charge. He worked till 1884, when the Rev. Father Alexander Scott was sent to Lowestoft. The temporary church was in a small room in Clapham Road, and here the services were held. The inadequacy of space at command considerably hindered Father Scott in his labours, but he went manfully on, undaunted by the difficulties

before him, and it is safe to say that, in his ministrations he has earned the respect and esteem, not only of those of his own faith, but of the townsfolk generally.

From the first he set his heart on a church commensurate with the dignity of worship. From time to time he received subscriptions, but they came in slowly, and although the site was secured the funds had never been sufficient to warrant the commencement of building. Something like three years ago, however, he received, with joyful surprise, a gift of £10,000 from a lady who desired to remain anonymous. This of course enabled him to set to work at once, and plans for the new church were got out by Mr. G. Baines F.R.I.B.A., and Mr. Reginald Baines, of Clement's Inn, London, the well-known ecclesiastical architects, and with them were associated Mr. F.W. Richards M.S.A., of Lowestoft. No time was lost in making a start. The contract was given to Mr. G. Hawes & Son, of Norwich, and by August 1900, the preliminaries had been so far advanced, that on the 23rd. of that month the foundation stone was laid by the Bishop of Northampton. With our issue of that week we gave a plate as supplement showing what the church would be like when finished. The new church continued the name of the temporary structure, and was dedicated to Our Lady Star of the Sea. Those who know the Roman Catholic hymn, "Ave Maris Stella", will recognise that as Lowestoft is a maritime port, there is a singular appropriateness in the designation -

Hail! Queen of Heaven, the Ocean Star,
Guide of the Wanderer here below,
Thrown on life's surge we claim thy care,
Save us from peril and from woe.
Mother of Christ, Star of the Sea,
Pray for the Wanderer, pray for me.

Since the date of the dedication, the work has been rapidly proceeded with, and it is to the credit of the builders that in less than two years the structure, with all its elaboration, should be ready for worship. The church itself consists of a nave 24 ft. wide and two aisles 13 ft. wide. The sanctuary which is apse-shaped, is 24 ft. wide with a length of 25 ft. On either side of the sanctuary is a chapel, each 13 ft. by 12 ft. The full length of the whole church is 115 ft. and the width 54 ft. The seats, which are of oak, will accommodate 800 persons in comfort. The main entrance faces the Gordon Road, and over the centre door, is a finely executed statue of the Virgin and child, the gift of Mr. William Catchpole, a member of the congregation.

There is a spacious portico, which projects from the front, with vestibule and minor lobbies, formed by handsome screens, fitted with swing doors, and having panels of cathedral glass. The flooring of this part is laid with terrazzo mosaic. To the left of the main entrance is the tower, which is 14 ft. square inside, and having swing doors forming another ingress to the church. Inside, the church is very lovely, with its quaint carvings and wealth of carving.

The sanctuary and altar therein first claim attention. In the sanctuary itself there are five stained glass windows, and the floor is laid with Roman marble mosaic. The altar is of stone, finely carved. The centre piece represents the Nativity, and in the side panels are angels in adoration. The shafting is of marble with carved cap. The praedilla and steps are of marble and mosaic, and the super altars are formed of Mexican marble with alabaster risers. The tabernacle on the altar, in which the Sacred Host is contained, has doors of hammered copper representing pelicans plucking their breasts. The casing is of pure alabaster, and the shafting of Mexican agate. The veils of the tabernacle are richly worked in silk. The Benediction throne has shafting of the same stone, with carved caps and heavy enriched canopy.

The monstrance to be used is very beautiful. It is in the form of a typical Northampton spire, surmounted by a cross with four minor spirets and is studded with real brilliants. At the base are fine crystals. This was the gift of a former member of the congregation. The sanctuary lamp, a fine piece of metal work, with the accessory pendants, has been given by Mr. & Mrs. J. E. Fraser.

The reredos is a magnificent example of the sculptor's art. The Benediction throne, with its elegant canopy, towers at the rear, and lower down are side panels, most exquisitely sculptured. There is a large panel representing "Our Lady Star of the Sea" – the Virgin holding up aloft a cross, a lighthouse shining forth, a ship wrecked on rocks, and two mariners kneeling in grateful adoration for succour. It is most realistic. Other panels show St. Raphael carrying his fish, St. Michael and various invocations from the Litany of Loretto – Turris Davidica, Turris Eburnea, Stella Matutina, Auxilium Christianorum etc. Those who have been privileged to examine the reredos have had nothing but admiration for it.

In the Lady Chapel is a magnificent statue of the Virgin and Child, done in pure white marble, and standing on a pedestal formed of roses and lilies. This is placed by Mr. Edward Wolseley in remembrance of his son, who was killed in South Africa. Mr. Wolseley is a relative of Lord Wolseley. The altar, reredos, statues, and all the carving and marble work have been executed by Mr. A.B. Wall, sculptor, of Cheltenham, from plans supplied by the architects, and his work has given the most unqualified satisfaction.

An organ gallery is erected over the main entrance vestibule, and is reached by a staircase from the tower. A fine three manual organ – the gift of the anonymous donor of the building – is placed here, and, with its silver frontal pipes, gives a decided tone to this end of the church. The full specification of the organ is as follows:

Great Organ C C to A – 58 notes

- 1 Open Diapason – 8 ft.
- 2 Stopped Diapason – 8 ft.
- 3 Hohl Flute – 8 ft.
- 4 Principal – 4 ft.
- 5 Harmonic Flute – 4 ft.
- 6 Flautina – 4 ft.
- 7 Trumpet – 8 ft.

Swell Organ

- 8 Bourdon – 16 ft.
- 9 Open Diapason – 8 ft.
- 10 Rohr Flute – 8 ft.
- 11 Salicional – 8 ft.
- 12 Voix Celeste – 8 ft.
- 13 Gemshorn – 4 ft.
- 14 Piccolo – 2 ft.
- 15 Oboe – 8 ft.

Choir Organ

- 16 Dulciana – 8 ft.
- 17 Lieblich Gedact 7 – 8 ft.
- 18 Snake Flute – 4 ft.
- 19 Clarionet – 8 ft.

Pedal Organ

- 20 Open Diapason – 16 ft.
- 21 Bourdon – 16 ft.

Couplers: Great to pedals, swell to pedals, choir to pedals, swell to great, swell to choir, pedals radiating and concave. Three composition pedals to swell, two to great, and one on and off great to pedals. The action is tubular pneumatic throughout, and there are altogether 1,152 pipes. The cost has been nearly £820. The organ was supplied by Messrs. Howlett & Son of Norwich, and built by Messrs. Norman & Beard of Norwich.

The church is heated by hot water radiators, and lighted by electricity, this portion of the work having been done by Messrs. Walker & Smith of Lowestoft. The wood block flooring of the nave and aisles has been supplied and laid by the Acme Flooring Company, and the glazing throughout the building has been carried out by Messrs. Weyer, of Norwich. In addition to the church is a large sacristy, and ample lavatory accommodation. There is sufficient land for schools and a priest's house, and there is a hope that before long these will be provided. It is a fine opportunity for wealthy members of the faith to add to the already splendid gift of the anonymous donor of the church and organ. Moreover, there is room in the town for a peal of bells. These Lowestoft sadly needs, and perhaps if an effort were made these might be forthcoming, especially as the church is in the centre of the town, and there is no other edifice where they can be hung.

The church was opened on Thursday morning with Pontifical High Mass. There was a large congregation and every seat was occupied. The celebrant was the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Northampton, and the assistant priest, the Very Rev. Canon Duckett, D.D., Rural Dean (Norwich). Deacons of the throne were Canon Rogers (Ipswich) and Canon Fitzgerald (Cossey); Deacon of Mass – Fr. E. Scott (Gorleston), with Father Mason (Southwold) as subdeacon. The Masters of Ceremonies were Father M.C. Carton de Weart, Bishop's Secretary, and Father William Cooper (Felixstowe); cross-bearer Father Long (St. George's, Norwich); book-bearer Father Henry O'Connor (Ipswich); mitre-bearer Father T.W. Carter (St. John's, Norwich); crozier-bearer Father C. Eeles (Kings Lynn). The other clergy in the sanctuary were the Right Rev. Monsignor Scott, D.D., Vicar General of the Diocese; Canon Moser (Peterborough), Canon Dwane (Lynford), Canon Pate (Northampton), Canon Richard, O.S.B. (Beccles), Father Jones, S.J. (Bury St. Edmunds), Father Perrin, S.J. (Bury St. Edmunds), Father Brennan (Thetford), who was present at Lowestoft from 1881 to 1884; Father A. Scott (priest at Lowestoft), Father Stanley (Wroxham), Father Miles (Stoke-by-Nayland), Father O'Hagan (Stowmarket), Father Conway (London), Father Redmond, S.J. (Gt. Yarmouth), Father Rigby, S.J. (Gt. Yarmouth). The music sung was the Mass of St. Cecilia, composed by Rev. Father Stanley, O.S.B. Mr. A.H. Tyler was at the organ, in the absence through illness, of Mr. John Ivimey, F.R.C.O. The soloists were Mr. A. H. Mallett, Miss Penley, Miss Purdy and Mr. W. Howard.

The sermon was preached by Monsignor Scott, from the text, "This is the declaration we have heard from Jesus Christ, and declare unto you that God is light." He said they could speak of Almighty God in the strict language of theology, they might use the language heard in childhood in Catechism, and they might speak of Him as a Supreme Being and Spirit, as existing and owning none but Himself, and from whom all others take their being. They could speak of Him in varied and scientific language, but it was not the language of practical devotion – it did not come from the heart.

He brought to their minds the life of St. Francis of Assisi. That holy saint spent the long hours of the night in prayer and meditation, and what were the words of devotion he used, simply, "My God and my all." There was no elaboration, just that simple expression, and each time he uttered it, it was with increased ecstasy. But St. Francis, like St. John, had a higher ideal in his heart of God's beauty and holiness than they could express. So long as they thought only of God's splendour, and, as shown

in the world, it would not satisfy them. They must think of God as the God of love – God is light and God is love. That was the splendour of God that caused the ecstasy of the saints, as it would cause the ecstasy of devout human beings.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem on the first Christmas morn there was a light which shone around the coming of Christ; but even that light was an insufficient ideal of our Lord. It was only when we followed his life from the beginning to the end that we could understand that He was the light of the world. At the opening of that beautiful church they naturally thought of the Church's wide extent, although they were only a small part of it; but they must also try to realise that they, too, were the light of the world, and that their light must shine forth. The Holy Sacraments must not be neglected but appreciated – not approached rarely and occasionally, and only from a sense of duty. There must be an intent to make all possible use of the privileges and graces that they had. They should show forth the light to others in greater perfection of charity. While they thought with gratitude of the generous benefactor, through whose munificence that beautiful church had been built, they must remember that they were the living church. The very beauty of that sacred edifice would draw all eyes to them and there must be something more attractive than stone or marble. They must show by their lives that they were part of the living church. Things that had been crushed were being restored; things old were being made new and brought to perfection, and all this through Jesus Christ our Lord. He would end with the prayer -

O Virgin, Mother of our God -
O Star on Life's Dark Sea,
We hail thee from afar.
O, by your merits keep in spotless fame,
That altar sacred to thy glorious name.

During the offertory the hymn, "Ave Maris Stella", was sung. The "Te Deum" was chanted in plainsong by the priests at the altar, and the hymn "Sweet Star of the Sea", was sung as a recessional, during which the Bishop frequently gave his blessing....."

The lengthy report continues with the arrangements and speeches made at an elegant luncheon served at Foulsham's Hotel, Denmark Road, after the opening ceremonies were concluded, to which over a hundred sat down. The Bishop, at the close, said they had received a letter from the kind benefactress. In the evening there was Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and an eloquent sermon was preached by the Rev. Canon Duckett, D.D., of Norwich.

As can be seen from the recent renovation of the tower, now stripped of the grime of ages and restored to its original colour, the church is built of red Somerleyton bricks and dressed with white Costessey stoneware and the tower, which was incomplete when the church was opened for worship, is 100 ft. high and is a prominent local landmark, visible for many miles from a southern aspect over land or sea.

With further subscriptions Father Scott had the presbytery built in 1906 on the east side of the church moving there from the previous presbytery at Clapham Road. In 1909 a committee of the Parish appealed for subscriptions in a specially published pamphlet towards making a suitable testimonial to Father Scott to mark the occasion of:

"Twenty five years the successful Priest of Lowestoft and the friend of thousands (known only to himself)."

The committee comprised L.D. Powles (Barrister), District Probate Registrar for Norfolk; F.W. Richards, M.S.A., M.I.A.S.(Architect); Joseph R. Curtin; Wm. Howard; R.S. Chapman and B. Jay (Hon. Secretary).

When Fr. Scott died in 1918 his body was laid to rest in Lowestoft Cemetery where his grave is marked by a white crucifix on a stone bearing his name and inscription "Catholic Rector of Lowestoft 1884 – 1918". He left behind him a church endowed with many fine attributes by generous benefactors. Besides those already mentioned, the magnificent High Altar and Reredos of Caen stone and alabaster, costing £750 is due chiefly to Sarah Wharton, John Kenyon, J.P. and Major Worswick. The Blessed Sacrament Altar is the gift of the Lawrence family who also gave the Sacred Heart statue and Paschal Candlestick. The original monstrance was donated by Miss Addison.

As this story already shows, our church has been and continues to be built and endowed by sacrifice and love as evidenced by the donations, large and small, given by many benefactors. There had been the contributions of sixpenny subscriptions by a large number and individual donations of a few, the main sum given by a lady who had attended Mass in the temporary church for four Sundays and had responded to Fr. Scott's appeal. We in our turn should remember to give thanks for our blessings in the same way today, to maintain and enhance the endowment of our church inheritance, so as to render, in action, liturgy and private prayer, the glory, honour and praise that is Almighty God's due, to support and work together with our priests, who are appointed by Apostolic Authority to be God's representatives in our midst.

Sharing in the life of the parish community is another way of serving our Lord by using our talents where they can be of service and many people down the ages have played leading visible roles and many others have

laboured quietly behind the scenes. Recent developments in lay ministry have also indicated new ways to share in the one Ministry of the Priesthood. Successive parishioners have played their part in the church's liturgical celebrations particularly in serving at the altar and in playing the organ.

Mr. Walter Howard had served at the netstore chapel since 1890 and continued to serve in the new church until 1910 as an altar server, being present at the opening Mass. His nephew David was a server in 1910 becoming M.C. when Gerard, Walter's son began to serve in 1925. Mr. Leuchesi, a Belgian refugee was M.C. in 1920 and when David Howard emigrated, Joseph Brooks, whose young brother John also used to serve until he joined the Royal Navy, was M.C. until 1939. Gerard Howard continued serving after the Second World War until 1969, the last 18 years as M.C. Previous to this Mr. E.A. (Ted) Reeman was sacristan in the early fifties and afterwards Mr. Alfred Scarff served as sacristan and M.C. for two decades until 1984. After a short spell undertaken by Mr. Leslie King, Mr. Michael Fathers, who served with the author in boyhood in the late 1950's at Our Lady's Church, took on this role and has trained the altar servers for the past eight years.

Organists also have given long service at Our Lady's. Miss Penley, who later also played at a local picture house, played for Fr. Scott and for Fr. Allan who succeeded him in 1918. Mr. James Croft played for sung Mass for Fr. Allan. By 1938 parishioners Cecilia Howard and Freda Crowe played for Thursday Benedictions, and daily Benedictions in May and October. After the main organ was damaged in the war, Freda Brooks played for all services on the American organ or harmonium for Fr. Phillips and Fr. Tomlinson till 1946 when family commitments took priority.

Mr. Brown, Miss Donoghue (Fr. Tomlinson's housekeeper), Mr. Rollason and Mrs. Soans all served on the restored church organ for many years. Mrs. Brooks resumed as organist in 1970 playing at Masses on Sunday and at Benedictions, Marriages and Funerals for Fr. Tomlinson and Fr. Sketch until 1986. Mr. Anderson supplied for a while until Mr. John Wilkins became organist. Then in 1990 George Marley (former organist at St. Peter and St. John's, Kirkley) supplied until parishioner Marie Long took on the job with George being called on occasionally.



Freda Brooks on the organ – Christmas 1985

ROBERT GREENWOOD ALLAN 1918 - 1941

Father Allan succeeded Fr. Scott in 1918 and had ground blessed by the Catholic Rites at the Public Cemetery at Kirkley in 1922. He set to work raising and expending moderately large sums on the fabric of the church providing further enhancements and elaboration to the interior design and decor.

Originally there were no altar rails. In the mid twenties he had marble altar rails installed before the side altars to match the main altar rails that had previously been installed by Father Scott with a pulpit before the left hand pillar of the main sanctuary arch c.1915. At about the same time, the side altars were partitioned from the main altar by wrought iron work, the gift of Herbert and Emily Parish.



Our Lady Star of the Sea interior c.1920

The altar to St. Joseph in the west side aisle was replaced by a replica of Michelangelo's "Pieta", the gift of the Lawrence family who also paid for the wooden panelling that was installed around the two side altars and the Baptistry. The statue of St. Joseph was set on a plinth on the front of the right hand side pillar of the sanctuary arch. Representations of the two English Martyrs St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More were painted over the sacristy entrance in the east aisle and fine frescoes in honour of the Kingship of Christ and the English Martyrs were painted on the sanctuary ceiling. Above the wooden panelling behind the statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel was painted a hart drinking from living water issuing in seven streams from the fount of life, the work of church artist Mr. Jarvis.

To mark the Silver Jubilee of Father Allan's ministry in 1927, a handsome set of carved wooden Stations of the Cross were erected around the church. Today they are without their original crosses that stood up behind the gilding at the apex but the name of each donor with a dedication in latin is recorded on a small plaque beneath each station as follows:



English Martyrs Thomas More & John Fisher

1. EX DONO DOMUS LAWRENCE AB HUGONE FILIO
2. EX DONO DOMUS LAWRENCE A MARIANNA MATRE
3. IN MEMORIAM EDWINI LAWRENCE + JUNII 5TH. 1902 RIP
4. IN MEMORIAM HENRICI LAWRENCE + DEC, 22nd. 1925 RIP
5. EX DONO DOMUS LAWRENCE A KATHARINA FILIA
6. EX DONO DOMUS LAWRENCE AB ALFREDO EDWINO FILIO
7. EX VOTO PRO OMNIBUS GRATIS AB HUGONE LAWRENCE
8. (plaque missing)
9. IN HONOREM ST. JOSEPH SPONSI B.V.M.
10. EX VOTO PRO SALUTE IN BELLO MAGNO 1914 -1918 H. LAWRENCE
11. COR JESU MISERERE NOBIS W. ET M. WAINWRIGHT 1926
12. IN GRATIARUM ACTIONE R.G. ALLAN CMC11 – CMCXXV11
13. ORA PRO ANIMA SARA WHARTON b. 1823 d. 1919 *
14. GRATIAS DEO PRO FIDE W A ET G WARD

* It was stated in an article in a Diocesan magazine of 1943 by Father Phillips, Parish priest of Lowestoft after Father Allan, that Sarah Wharton whose name appears below the thirteenth station, was the original anonymous benefactress of the church.

Also in the mid 1920's the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in the Lady Chapel was donated by the Children of Mary, the association in the parish comprised mainly of St. Mary's Convent and former Convent schoolgirls. Costing £33, it was bought with the sixpence a month subscriptions together with a narrow candlestick that fitted on the ledge of the frame. In the late 1930's Father Allan introduced the beautiful Blessed Sacrament Guild Service and Benediction was held daily during May and October. He was assisted at this time by Father Flanagan who was a chaplain at St. Mary's Convent and School. By 1939 Father Allan could look with pride on a church beautifully endowed and recently redecorated and the Convent playing an ever active role in the life of the Parish.

As Parish Priest Father Allan had welcomed the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur to the town in 1921 when they opened a school in a large house (Wilmington) in Kirkley Park Road.

They followed an order of nuns who had previously established a convent and school at Boston Lodge when they arrived as refugees from France at the outbreak of the Great War. The French order were called the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and their chaplain was a Belgian refugee Fr. Mellis who was also chaplain to the 48 schoolchildren (including some boarders) in 1919 and to the Free Belgian Forces. Due to financial difficulties Boston Lodge School was closed and the Sisters returned to France.

Parishioner Germaine Harvey wrote of her memories of the school in the Christmas 1988 edition of the Parish Magazine:

"Growing older has brought back many memories of the Boston Lodge Convent School and my early days at the church of Our Lady Star of the Sea. Father Scott stands out in my mind as the kindly priest who came to the children's birthday parties and joined in all the games. I remember his officiating at the wedding in 1916 of one of the Howard family and I was a bridesmaid. One incident which stands out very clearly was when Father Scott, one evening at Benediction, said there had been a lot of unpleasant talk which had upset him. His words were – "I have my name engraved on these stained glass windows". This sentence of his has been imprinted on my mind ever since.

When he died all the children from the Convent attended his funeral carrying small posies which they threw onto his coffin. One



The twelfth station given in thanksgiving by Fr. Allan

family really fascinated me as a child at Mass. It was the Lawrence's. I would watch transfixed as they slowly walked down the aisle together. Major Lawrence, a very distinguished looking military man with a waxed moustache, bowler hat and cane would head the small procession. Mrs. Lawrence would be supported by her daughter's arm, both elegantly dressed in powder blue.

When I was scarcely four years old I attended the Boston Lodge Convent School with my older brother. It seemed a very long walk each day from our house in Grove Road, where Marks & Spencer's car park is now. I used to take an egg in a cocoa tin which the Sisters would boil each day for my dinner. Sr. Lucy was the gardener and also used to pull out our baby teeth when they were loose. Sr. Margaret was in charge of the laundry. Sr. Julie gave piano lessons and Sr. Mary would try and drum the 'Three R's' into us.

When my brother left to go to the British School where the Electricity Board showrooms are now, I had to go to school each day by myself. I remember well the beautiful little chapel in the Convent. You had to climb some very steep steps to enter. I wonder what happened to those wonderful statues of the Blessed Virgin. The Convent gardens were peaceful and idyllic and I particularly remember the huge mulberry tree which had the most delicious fruit. I can taste it to this day. There was also a walnut tree, and after any windy nights we would get to school early to gather up any nuts that had been blown down. This was like the Garden of Eden and the temptations were enormous. Those delicious fruits got me into trouble on more than one occasion. My worst offence was when I went into the kitchen garden and took several rosy red apples. In the classroom later, Sr. Mary asked everyone to put their tongue out so that she could find out who had stolen the apples. Of course I kept mine in and she found her culprit.

A sad time came when it was decided to segregate the children – those whose parents could afford the fees and those who were less fortunate. A dividing fence was erected from the grotto to the smaller classrooms. This particularly upset me as I was now parted from my dear friends the Coleman sisters: Vera, Edna and Eileen. Being older now and able to look back, I realise what a tragic thing this was and I know it gave me an inferiority complex. Nevertheless, they were happy days."

Sister Mary Joan and Miss Muriel Crews were the first pupils at St. Mary's when the school opened at Wilmington then transferred to Lancing House, Rectory Road and then to Alpington, Rectory Road (Kirkley Cliff) all within the first year. Sister Mary Joan was received into the church when she was a pupil there and stayed on to join the novitiate in 1924 becoming a sister three years later. She lived all her life in service with the order, teaching and caring until her death in 1989. The following advertisements were placed in the Lowestoft Journal:

"Convent High School for Girls to be opened September 20th. 1921, Wilmington, Kirkley Park Road. A few boarders can be accepted. Prospectus on application to the Sister Superior. Pupils are prepared for University of Oxford local examinations, London Matriculation, the Royal Academy and Royal College of Music. Kindergarten classes for younger children. Pupils religious opinions are not interfered with."

This next advertisement appeared in seven weekly editions between October 15th. 1921 and February 4th, 1922 but by the end of November 1921 it had already closed:

"Convent High School, Kirkley Park Road, Lowestoft. Trained graduates on teaching staff. Prospectus on application."

A letter to the editor of the Lowestoft Journal on November 19th. 1921 throws light on this unwanted experience of St. Mary's School:

"Sir, I am extremely sorry to see that the good sisters of the above convent have to abandon the idea of carrying on a high grade school in Kirkley Park Road. It appears a few individuals residing in the vicinity are up against these sisters continuing this good work, and so Lowestoft loses what it very badly needs. Any idea that a school of this description would in any way tend to depreciate the surrounding properties is, of course ridiculous; it goes without saying the opposite would be the case. I must say it passes my comprehension how any man of the world, or still more anyone who helped to fight our battles across the water, would possibly object to the incoming of any mission of the noblest and most self sacrificing creature of the world viz. a Catholic nun. To my mind the affair narrows itself into one of sheer bigotry of the worst type. Yours faithfully, H. Throckmorton, Capt. Royal Navy (retired)."

The following week Father Allan wrote to the editor:

"Sir, Concerning the Kirkley Convent School, it is acknowledged on all sides that it supplies a long-felt need, and has received a sincere and sympathetic welcome. It is only necessary to add that the school will be continued, in spite of the extraordinary conduct of those from whom, as public servants, one would have expected a better public spirit and a more disinterested conception of local requirements. Surely the motto "Pro Bono Publico" should stand, even when personal right and petty, individual interest are involved. This is at least to be expected from public men. Yours, R.G. Allan, Catholic Rectory, Lowestoft, Nov.22 1921."

The first of nine weekly advertisements next appeared in the Lowestoft Journal of April 15th. 1922 as follows:

"High School for Girls, trained teachers on staff, Kirkley House, Rectory Road, South Lowestoft. Fees 6 guineas per term, half fees in Kindergarten. Marine Lodge, London Road North, fees 2 guineas per term. Apply for prospectus of either to the Mother Superior, St. Mary's Convent, South Lowestoft."

The northern section of the Convent School moved after a few months to Holm View in the High Street and the main southern section became established at St. Mary's Convent, formerly known as the guesthouse Alington in Rectory Road on Kirkley Cliff after moving across the road from Kirkley House (later known as Lancing School and now Lancing Court). My aunt, Stella Brooks remembers her early days at Boston Lodge School with the French nuns and then at Marine Lodge and Holm View with the Sisters of Mary. In 1937 the northern and southern sections of the school were united at St. Mary's Convent School, Kirkley Cliff when the Dagmar Hotel, the property between the Convent and the Victoria Hotel was acquired, converted and attached to the main Convent building.

During the Second World War the Convent School, in keeping with other schools in the borough, was evacuated. The Order ran a house in Rhyl and several girls and the Sisters were evacuated, first to Conway, then to Rhyl in June 1940, for the duration of the war. Upon return after the war the nuns had to prepare the School and Convent for its normal use, the building having been requisitioned by the Admiralty and used to house WRNS personnel during hostilities.

Charles Manning began a series of articles entitled "Looking Back" for the Parish Magazine at Easter 1989 and the following piece is a precis of the first part of his series with some extra wartime detail added:

"How far back shall I go? Might I suggest 1937. In those way-back days it would not have been an unusual sight in our town to see on the streets a large 'sit-up-and-beg' type of cycle propelled by a small cleric dressed entirely in black from the shoes on his feet to the cap on his head. This was our Parish Priest Father Allan on his rounds to the home of his parishioners, maybe visiting the sick or just making a friendly call on someone seeking his advice. Of course he may have been tracking down some truant from his or her duties or a child missing from Sunday Mass or Sunday School.

On certain Sunday evenings we had Compline. This was a very colourful and beautiful ceremony and at times the church was near full. Remember in those days there was no television to compete with Sunday evening services and it was far safer for our older parishioners to walk the streets after dark. The Blessed Sacrament Guild was very much in evidence on those particular Sunday evenings dressed in their red cloaks and sashes which all added to the light and colour illumination of the church. Not to forget the sounds of both choir and organ accompanying the singing of the people. The once a month "Holy Hour" with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament certainly impressed me.

The pulpit represented the flagship of Father Allan and once ensconced there he would direct his guns in any direction and send broadsides into the congregation as and when he considered them necessary. No doubt we deserved these admonitions and thus we accepted them in all humility. I very much doubt if we would be prepared to give the same attention and acceptance in these so-called 'enlightened' days.

We had an assistant priest who lived at the Convent of St. Mary of Namur acting as their Chaplain giving whatever assistance he could to the parish priest. His name was Father Flanagan, a priest well-known to the residents of the town for his scholarly approach and insistence to explain in detail to any unbelievers – whoever they might be – who had the wrong interpretation of some point of our faith.

I have always felt very much at home in this lovely church of Our Lady Star of the Sea, a Pugin-type church as was my own in Yorkshire. Today I consider it to be even more beautiful.



Fr. Allan – Parish Priest c.1938

Its Gothic charm is enhanced by the improvements made so much so that I feel sure that even Augustus Welby Pugin may have been well satisfied with its present day appearance – he, a man to whom 'Gothic' was almost considered a religion, was never easy to satisfy.

There was very little social life, maybe because of the shadow of a coming war and to the lack of a hall. The nearer we came to the outbreak of hostilities things changed – every week new regulations and new personnel made it very plain that soon we would be considered in the front line of home defence and very vulnerable to air bombardment, our big church well in the forefront and thus a main target. My own place of employment was almost next door to the church and one sunny afternoon after we declared war my place was razed to the ground and I boarded up my house and joined the R.A.F.

One character from those days was Petty Officer Andy Everson from H.M.S. Europa, a naval shore station at Sparrow's Nest with its sailors billeted in various parts of the town. Every Sunday morning Andy and his band of catholic sailors came down to Mass and he and his men (with Admiralty permission) were always ready to help our parish priest after a raid to tidy up.

It is said [by the author's late father Jack Brooks who was in the congregation at the time] that upon a certain raid signalled by the warning sirens the priest was



Fr. Flanagan strolling down the prom with parishioners Herbert and Emily Parish c.1938

interrupted by General Absolution due to an unexploded bomb lying outside the main door! Father Allan retired through ill health in 1941 and Father Phillips took over the parish, living with his predecessor at the Sanctuary, a privately owned rest and holiday home for priests at Gunton on the Yarmouth Road run by a group of Franciscan Nuns. The house is today boarded up and is the last bungalow on the right out of Lowestoft before the new Tesco's store roundabout. The author's mother Freda used to play the harmonium for Benediction services there before the war, for Fr. Allan and the Rt. Rev. Mgr. John Freeland, the former Vicar Capitular of Northampton Diocese who lived in retirement there.

THOMAS KEMP PHILLIPS 1941 - 1945

Father Phillips ministered to the civil population who had not been called up for National Service or who had not been evacuated because they were involved in the essential services that were needed to keep the town running. He also ministered to the personnel of the armed forces, mainly sailors and wrens, who were stationed at the wartime bases in Lowestoft and billeted around the town with Lowestoft's host of landladies (or "ma's" as they were affectionately nicknamed).

Father Phillips worked in liaison with many priests who were based in the town including the British Forces Chaplains Frs. William F. Scanlon, D.J. Madden, Christopher Shine O.F.M. and Francis McDermott; the Czech Forces Chaplain F. Vaniceak S.J. and the Belgian Forces Chaplains Eugenio C. Dethise and Andreas Beke, all of whom have left their signatures as evidence in the parish records, particularly the 'Liber Baptizatorum'.

In 1943 Father Phillips encouraged a branch of the Catholic Women's League to be set up and the inauguration took place with Mrs. Lewis as President, Mrs. Chapman as Treasurer and Miss Kathleen Sharkey as Secretary. One of the first projects of the C.W.L. was to provide a mobile canteen for relief and rescue workers in Holland after their liberation from Nazi tyranny. Successive presidents of the Lowestoft branch over the years have been Miss Theresa Batley, Miss Sharkey, Mrs. Norah Sears, Mrs. Edith Shanahan, Mrs. Eileen Hayhoe, Mrs. Irene Vining, Mrs. Eileen Blake and Miss Stella Brooks.



The Church after an air raid 1941 - All windows out

confronted during the Mass with the decision whether to carry on with the Mass or lead the small congregation out of the church into the sacristy for safety. In the confusion the loud strong voice of P.O. Everson was heard to order the command "Everybody stop!" and then to the priest in a courteous manner "Carry on Father!" Father Allen gave General Absolution and they all then calmly made for safety and the situation was resolved."

Father Allan witnessed terrible destruction of lives and property due to hit and run air raids beginning in 1940 in this frontline port and saw the spoiling of a lot of his careful work of the previous two decades. Though the church was spared a direct hit, much blast damage was done especially to the roof and windows which had to be boarded up. On one occasion Mass had to be

ARTHUR ANTHONY TOMLINSON 1945 - 1982

In 1945 Father Tomlinson succeeded Father Phillips as Parish Priest finding much work needed in order to repair the fabric of the church and to minister to a growing population influx to the parish. Fortunately a succession of curates assisted him in this work over the years whose names are listed in the Priests Roll. The following is an extract about his early days at Lowestoft taken from an article he wrote about his sixty years in the Priesthood published in a Commemorative Edition of the Parish Magazine marking his Diamond Jubilee in 1992:

"After the war I came to Lowestoft, a place I knew well from my boyhood days. The Bishop, Leo Parker, in his letter of appointment said 'I am sending you to your native heath (almost correct!). It will be a job for life.' I arrived on 17th. September 1945. The Church of Our Lady Star of the Sea and Rectory were in a sorry state, having suffered from the ravages of war. I shall never forget the first Christmas Midnight Mass after my arrival. The windows of the church had been blown out and the openings had been boarded up to keep out the wind and snow. The organ was out of action, the heating system was not working and the church had to be heated by paraffin stoves. Many of the parishioners were still evacuated or on service, but sailors, wrens, nurses and other military personnel who had stayed to clear up after the war filled the church. They sang 'Silent Night' as I had never heard it sung before. By the grace of God the church was reinstated and re-beautified."



A view of the Church from the bomb sites to the west in 1945. Parishioner Kathleen Sharkey was trapped by debris in the raid on the former Carnegie Library in 1941. As assistant librarian she was escorting a gentleman downstairs to the air raid shelter during an alarm when the building was struck.



The Church newly boarded up c1942 as seen from the Co-operative Society bomb site, the pre-war workplace of Charles Manning.

Charles Manning continued 'Looking Back' in the Summer and Christmas 1989 editions of the Parish Magazine:

"When I saw the church of 'Our Lady Star of the Sea' again the war was over and I would soon be out of uniform. It was very obvious to me that the town of Lowestoft had taken a most dreadful bashing and thus our lovely church was showing all the signs of having been in the forefront of hostilities. Windows were boarded up in an effort to keep out the worst of the east coast weather. Inside, the beautiful decorated frescoes on the ceiling of the sanctuary were peeling, this disfiguration extending to other frescos on the walls of both sanctuary and in the body of the church which included our much commended 'Stations of the Cross'. All of this damage needed the attention of an artist to put them back to their original beauty."

The heavy bombing by enemy aircraft had shaken the church and had demolished many buildings in close proximity. Our town library and the central premises of the Co-operative society had been destroyed – these buildings only a few yards from the church!

Many homes of our townspeople had been bombed in the same area. In spite of this our church escaped a direct hit. No doubt Our Blessed Lady had kept a watchful eye on her church during its most horrendous moments. The continuity of the Mass had been preserved even though in the midst of heavy air raids! Think of our courageous clergy and also our resolute and brave congregations during those times of trial. Having been given a General Absolution they were prepared to risk their lives in order to hear Mass and receive the Blessed Sacrament, whatever the circumstances. What an example to follow. These men and women had the will and intent of the martyrs. May we always remember them in our prayers.

It was an experience to attend early morning Mass on a Sunday and in particular in winter. The wind would whistle through the windowless windows, the boards proving inadequate in keeping out the bitter wind, this lowering the temperature and thus making the church very cold in spite of the heating provided.

It is to be noted that a big number of our parishioners came from the outskirts of the parish, and, owing to the fact that the bus service did not operate until ten o'clock on Sunday morning, most of our people had to walk! Men, women and children, the very young being pushed along in their prams. Some of the journeys made in wind, rain and snow. With the prospect of a cold church waiting for them at the end of this unpleasant 'trek', with the knowledge that after Mass they would face a cold walk home with their little families, some would take the bus home, that is if they could afford the fare! No church hall in those early days and no St. Nicholas (Chapel of Ease) at the south end of the parish.

The absence of a church hall left us only with the use of the Rectory. This at the expense of our parish priest and his housekeeper, poor Miss Donoghue – she and Father Tomlinson hardly ever had the house free to themselves. It behoves us to think again when we say "Those were the days". Nevertheless, it was a very happy congregation of church workers, with a parish priest we all loved and respected.

Many of our present-day parishioners were not living within the confines of the parish in those early post-war days, in fact, a good number of them had not been born. Nevertheless, time marches on and some of us tag along with it! We had no S.V.P. Society, no K.S.C., no Wives Group, but we did have the C.W.L. and the Children of Mary, with an excellent Blessed Sacrament Guild which was for men only. The only drawback was that it did not provide for social activities. The bazaars had to be held in the Rectory, the official opening of these taking place from the Rectory staircase with the two front rooms holding the stalls plus tables for tea! Believe me when I say that even in these cramped quarters we certainly did have such fun."



Fr. Tomlinson & Fr. Hacon kneel in prayer with the pilgrims and the Westminster Cross at Waveney Dock, Lowestoft 1948

In 1948 the parish was involved in an act of national significance. A cross-carrying pilgrimage to Walsingham took place with the 14 crosses now erected at the Slipper Chapel Shrine being borne on foot from all corners of the kingdom. The Westminster cross was borne through the town by the men of the parish en route to Gt. Yarmouth and thence to Walsingham. The walk with the cross began with its reception at Pakefield.

The procession then made its way down London Road to Gordon Road, pausing on the open dockside at the Waveney Dock for an open air service and rally with some French pilgrims who had come by boat and coach from Boulogne with their statue of Our Lady sitting in a boat and holding the infant Jesus.

The French Pilgrims were also en route to Walsingham in thanksgiving for deliverance from the evils of war. The whole party then proceeded to Our Lady Star of the Sea where the witness ended for the day. Next day the cross and statue were then taken in procession through Gordon Road, London Road North, High Street and Yarmouth Road and on to Gt. Yarmouth. The French bore their statue to Walsingham where it was hoped it would be accepted as a gift to the shrine. The shrine authorities thought that two different titles and statues of Our Lady at one shrine would be confusing to say the least and so it was brought back to Lowestoft and accepted by Father Tomlinson as a fitting gift to Our Lady Star of the Sea from the Frenchmen.

This present statue is one of the two survivors of the four replicas made of the original statue that was so revered in France over the centuries.

It is thought to be the statue that rested in Lourdes in unoccupied France till 1943 when its return to Boulogne began on March 28th. when France was consecrated that day to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The journey back to Boulogne

coincided with the struggle for liberation, the statue becoming for free Frenchmen everywhere, a symbol of their resurgence.

In 1949 Father Tomlinson bought three redundant army huts at Lound for £25 each and assisted by Father Hacon and parishioners, had them dismantled and transported to Gordon Road with the object of using the materials to construct the Stella Maris Hall. A building licence of £1500 was secured to execute the main part of the work which was done by Castleton Builders of Lowestoft. Spare wood from the huts was used by Walter and Gerard Howard in the construction of the indoor Christmas Crib scene which has been erected annually in Our Lady's since then.

A donation of £1000 was given towards the hall project by Mr. F. Howard who had not long been received into the Church. This was to be a legacy after his death, but Fr. Tomlinson said that the decision to give the money at once showed wisdom, because the donor could see in his lifetime the use to which the money had been put. It was appreciated that this gift was the fruit of many years hard work and careful saving.



Fr. Tomlinson leads the procession from the dock to Our Lady Star of the Sea Church 1948



The statue of Our Lady of Boulogne – This has a long and venerable history dating back to 633 A.D. According to an old tradition there arrived on the shore of Boulogne that year a boat brought hither "not by oars or sailors, but by the hand of God alone, or by the ministry of angels". The townsfolk were at that moment gathered in the church transformed three centuries earlier from a Roman temple dedicated to Minerva to a Christian Church by St. Victor, Bishop of Rouen who evangelised the area. Our Lady appeared to them and told them that they would find her statue in the boat and that she wished them to bring it to the church to receive their devotion, so that she might afford them her protection.

This is yet another example of the wonderful provision generated by the grateful thanksgiving of our predecessors and an opportunity for us all to ponder the level of our thanksgiving as we contemplate the future of our church at the approach of the third millenium.

The Stella Maris Hall was opened by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Leo Parker of Northampton on Friday November 25th. 1949. The first event run in the hall was a Christmas Bazaar, organised by the Catholic Women's League, under their president, Miss K. Sharkey. The producer of the Lowestoft Repertory Company, Miss Mollie Hartley-Milburn, opening the bazaar to raise funds for the hall, commented on the cleanliness of the church during repair work and said it showed how much the parish cherished the building.

In its fiftieth year, and after restoration of the fabric damaged during the war, the church was consecrated. The replacement of the stained glass windows was a major item of the restoration and a small pane situated at the base of the window on the right hand side of the sanctuary, as you face the altar, records the following:

"The windows in the sanctuary replace those destroyed by bombs in the 1939 – 1945 war and were dedicated by his Lordship the Bishop of Northampton at the Consecration on the 22nd. October 1952."

The sanctuary windows themselves are very beautiful with rich coloured tones and record events from the life of Our Lord and Our Lady and they also proclaim the Kingship of the Risen Christ. There are five main windows each divided into two halves with a separate panel above. The bases of the two windows at the extremities are visible above blank walls but the other three are partially obscured by the Reredos and Benediction Throne, including the wording at the base.

From the left the first window portrays two angels bearing scrolls of the Kingship of Christ, "REX VITAE" and "REX

PACIS" ("King of Life" and "King of Peace") facing the Annunciation to Mary by the Angel Gabriel. Above is a circular panel of St. Alexander, a Doctor of the Church.

The next window depicts the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi with the inscription "AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US" at the base with a panel of (Pope) St. G. (Gregory) above.

The centre panel depicts Our Lord in heaven offering a crown to Mary as Queen of all Saints, with a panel of Christ the King above.

Further right, the next window shows the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple by Joseph and Mary to Simeon with the inscription below "A LIGHT TO THE REVELATION OF THE GENTILES". Above is a panel showing St. A. (Augustine), the first Archbishop of Canterbury.

Furthest right two more angels bearing scrolls "REX AMORIS" and "REX COELI" ("King of Love" and "King of Heaven") face towards a depiction of the Assumption of Our Blessed Lady into Heaven. The panel above shows St. George, the Patron Saint of England.

Two interesting points about the windows are that though some panels are the same, they were not replaced in their original positions after the war, as an inspection of a pre-war photograph shows that the four angels holding scrolls are in the centre panel. Also the christian names of Father Scott were George and Alexander and are thus recorded on two of the circular panels.

The two side chapels have circular windows, each with a latin text encircling the new designs. The window above the altar of the Blessed Sacrament chapel has a motif relating to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the inscription "IGNEM VENI MITTE IN TERRAM COR JESU MISERERE NOBIS", ("I come to spread fire on earth, Heart of Jesus have mercy on us").

Above the Lady Chapel altar is a window depicting seven swords of sorrow piercing Our Lady's Heart and the inscription "STABAT MATER DOLOROSA JUXTA CRUCEM LACRYMOSA DUM PENDEBAT", ("The sorrowful mother stands weeping near the cross whilst he hangs there").

Down the aisles of the church are wide arch-shaped windows alternately representing the Kingship of Christ with crowns and the Mystery of the Holy Trinity with trifoliate designs. Along the upper walls of the Nave, are five pairs of windows that allow in much sunlight and which depict crowns and behind the organ is a large window with a cross.

All the ceilings of the nave and aisle were repainted and the three-tiered papal crown and keys of St. Peter, the sign of the Roman Catholic Church, was painted above the point of the sanctuary arch. The ceiling of the sanctuary showing The Kingship of Christ with the angels and saints (in honour of the English Martyrs) was restored.



Fresco of Christ the King on the ceiling of the Sanctuary.

The ceilings of the side altars were painted with angels bearing shields with emblems relating to the dedication of the altar. The ceiling of the Blessed Sacrament Altar has shields with gifts of the offertory, wheat and grapes, and symbols of Christ's suffering. The Lady Chapel angels bear shields with titles of honour of Our Lady.

Fr. Tomlinson produced a souvenir programme of the Consecration ceremony which included a history and explanation of the Rites of Consecration and a history of the Parish. The *Lowestoft Journal* of October 24th. 1952 reported the event as follows:

"Consecration of Roman Catholic Church – Bishop and Priests in Solemn Lowestoft Ceremonies – FIFTY YEARS AGO, following a gift of £10,000, the Roman Catholic

Church of "Our Lady Star of the Sea" was built in Gordon Road, Lowestoft. When it was opened it was "dedicated", but on Wednesday, restored at a cost of £14,000 after war damage, and having become the centre of a growing Roman Catholic community, it was further hallowed when the Bishop of Northampton (the Rt. Rev. Monsignor Leo Parker) "consecrated" the church and High Altar during ceremonies which lasted over four hours.

Attended by a retinue of robed priests and accompanied by Mr. Frank Rudham, of Southwold, in the green Papal uniform of a Knight of the Order of St. Gregory, the Bishop went round the church three times sprinkling it with Holy Water and then, with the congregation still outside, he entered the building and took part in a ceremony which included the writing of the Greek and Latin

alphabets on ashes sprinkled on the floor in the form of a large cross.

For the consecration of the High Altar by the Bishop and of the two other altars by the Rt. Rev. Monsignor Provost Peacock and



Bishop Leo Parker consecrates the Church 1952

the Rt. Rev. Monsignor Canon McShee, the relics of two early Christian martyrs of the Catacombs, St. Clementius and St. Clementina, were placed in cavities in the altars and sealed there with cement. The relics had been brought to Lowestoft earlier and had lain in a Chapel of Relics in the adjoining Stella Maris Hall. After being taken from this chapel and before being taken into church the relics were borne in solemn procession by four priests in red chasubles who with the Bishop and priestly retinue, circled the church before entering by the main door. After the relics had been sealed in the altars the Bishop went round the inside of the church anointing the twelve crosses on its walls which are to serve as a sign of the holiness of the temple.

The climax of the consecration ceremonies was the celebration of Solemn High Mass and, in the evening, Pontifical Benediction was given. Afterwards the Bishop presided at a parish dinner at the Hotel Victoria....The toast of "The Parish" was put by Mr. J. P. G. Dunne...In his reply Father Tomlinson said he first wanted to pay tribute to his predecessors and to Father Alexander Scott, who was priest when the church was built, and to Father Robert Allan who followed him and who remained until 1941.

"He was a brave man in time of war," Father Tomlinson said. Father Tomlinson also spoke of Father Flanagan, who was a great friend of the poor, and then, speaking of himself, said: "Our church is one of the finest in the Diocese and I am very proud of it. Today something has been done to further hallow it – I am prepared to stay here till the end of my days."

Dr. T. S. Nicol proposed the toast of "His Lordship the Bishop and the Guests," and replies were made by the Bishop and by the Mayor (Mr. W.H.B.Sanders). The Bishop said that since he came to

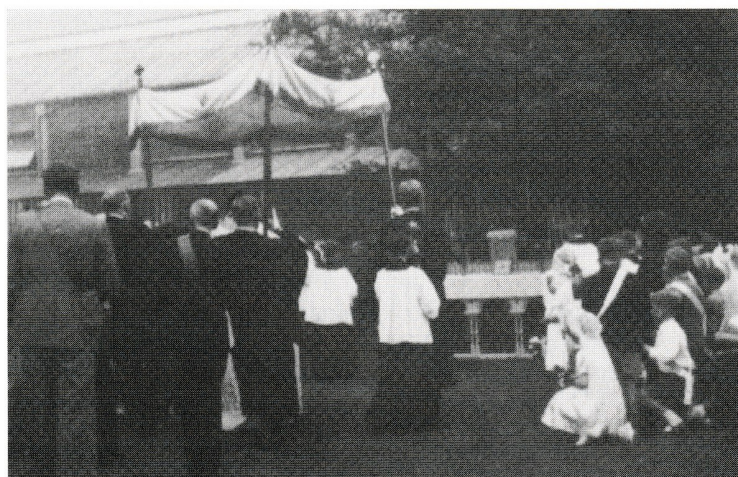
Lowestoft Father Tomlinson had done great things. He was sent to rebuild the church and rebuild the parish. Now he (the Bishop) wanted to know what they were going to do in the rest of the town – in the south and at Oulton Broad.

"It is a great thing that has happened here today," the Bishop said. "The consequence is that God has accepted this event and has elected to dwell with us. The church is the place where God listens to his people – the great God of creation deigns to come and dwell with you. There are certain events in life which are joyful, but the consecration of a church and the hallowing of it is surely joy unalloyed."...

During the dinner reference was made to the work of George Baines and Sons, of London, the original architects of the church, who had also directed the work of restoration, and the help of the builders, Leighton and Sons, of Lowestoft, who had been responsible for the restoration work."

Around this time parish groups such as the Catholic Young Men's Society and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul were established. Mr. Charles Manning was the first president of the Our Lady Star of the Sea Conference, with founder members Bernard Welby and Geoffrey Hartman who for many years was the caretaker at St. Mary's Convent School. Subsequent presidents of the SVP have been Mr. William Smith and Mrs. Patricia Walmsley. The number of altar servers began to increase in the 1950's and, led by Mr. E. A. (Ted) Reeman and Mr. G (Gerry) Howard who was M.C., a branch of the Guild of St. Stephen was formed. The author's love of ceremony and service must have been kindled when serving masses for Fr. Tomlinson, and successive curates Frs. Griffiths and Sloan, as well as for the numerous visiting and relief priests Frs. Swann, Roper, Chapman, Batley, Armishaw and Reeman. Sometimes three Masses were being offered at the same time, one at each altar.

Council 518 of the Knights of St. Columba was inaugurated in the Stella Maris Hall in January 1956 with Dr. Sean Freyne as Grand Knight and Mr. Edward Conroy as Deputy G.K. Present surviving founder members who have since been awarded the Order's meritorious jewel are Bro. Charles Manning and Bro. Arthur Birtwistle. Also honoured for their service in the Lowestoft Council are Bro. Conroy R.I.P., Bro. Malcolm Garrett, Bro. Dr. Joseph Salmon R.I.P., Bro. Frank Mooney, Bro. Paul Blythe, Bro. Dennis Marfleet and Bro. John Earley. Dr. Salmon became East Anglia Provincial Grand Knight for three years before serving for six years as a Supreme Director of the Order. Brothers succeeding Dr. Freyne as Grand Knight of the council have been Bros. Edward



Benediction at the garden altar c1955 (now the site of the Britten Centre market)

Conroy, Arthur Birtwistle, Charles Manning, John Rogers, Ronald Harrod, Paul Blythe, Dr. Joseph Salmon, William Smith, Malcolm Garrett, Michael Heil, Anthony Walmsley, Christopher Brooks, Stephen Smith, Francis Mooney, Michael Fathers and currently Jack Thain. Bro. Michael Fathers is currently the Provincial Grand Knight of East Anglia.

The Children of Mary and Blessed Sacrament Guild, both founded in the inter war years in the parish, were active in the annual processions to an outdoor altar erected in the garden behind the sanctuary in the fifties and early sixties if weather permitted. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was held during these devotions in May and at Corpus Christi.

These processions continued indoors in the seventies. In 1986 work commenced on the demolition of the bus station to the east of the church and the market square of the Britten Centre now covers this former church ground up to a waist-high wall skirting the apse. A new wall and gate separates the Stella Maris Hall site from the Britten Centre and the presbytery garden remains with a new rear wall and gate. At the time of the development, the exterior wall of the apse was renovated and new protective transparent coverings were placed over the sanctuary windows.

In 1955, a former billiard hall in Blackheath Road was obtained and converted into a chapel to serve the south of the town. It was opened by Mr. Frank Ward, the only Catholic Mayor of Lowestoft, and was dedicated to St. Nicholas with a ceremony conducted by Canon H. Parker of Gorleston. It was followed by Mass celebrated by Fr. Tomlinson with Fr. Houghton of Bury St. Edmund's, Fr. Wingfield Digby of Gt. Yarmouth and priests from Norwich, North Walsham and Southwold present.

Mass is offered here at 9.15 a.m. on Sundays and Holydays and, since the late 1980's, on Tuesday evenings, with confessions Saturdays.

A tabernacle, formerly in use at St. Mary's Convent until its closure in 1990, was installed in 1991 at St. Nicholas for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament.

In 1957 Fr. Tomlinson celebrated the Silver Jubilee of his priesthood with many priests and friends in attendance at the Mass of Thanksgiving. The fifties and sixties were a busy and happy time for many of the families of the parish. Mary and Gunton Jones, writing in the Parish Magazine to commemorate Father Tomlinson's Diamond Jubilee in 1992 recalled:

"We remember the children's summer outings (by steam train) to St. Olave's. At these Sunday school treats, races by the children were a feature with a sixpence being given to each winner. Refreshments were provided by the C.W.L. and ice cream by the Capaldi family. The football lottery raised funds for the parish. A band of workers descended on the presbytery each Saturday evening to record the football scores from the radio, type, stencil and duplicate 800 copies. These were passed to the collectors on Sundays to be handed to their members during the week in both Lowestoft and Gorleston. The winners were those who achieved the highest number of goals scored by their three randomly chosen teams.

There were the children's parties held each Christmas in the old hall and the fetes held around the Convent when it was still a boarding school. We enjoyed Old Tyme Dancing on Tuesday evenings and the Whist Drives on Wednesdays and still look back on those days with affection. Father Tomlinson could always be depended upon to urge us on to one more effort. The money raised at these events was important but the participating and togetherness was always a main concern. He was a friend as well as our Parish Priest and could always be relied upon for advice when difficult problems arose."

Pilgrimages were a feature of Parish life at this time and most summers a parish party would visit Our Lady's



St. Nicholas Chapel of Ease, Blackheath Road – 1973



Stella Maris – Church and Hall c.1952

East Anglian occasions and gave people over the Diocese a chance to meet each year and worship the Lord together. The Dunwich pilgrimage gathered in the main street near the church and processed along and up the hill to the Franciscan Friary Grounds which were made available once a year for the occasion.

The last regular pilgrimage took place in 1962 but was revived for one year a decade later by Fr. Pritchard of Southwold assisted by the Lowestoft Knights of St. Columba led by Grand Knight William (Bill) Smith. The Diocesan newspaper PACE recorded:

"The K.S.C. not only brought a coach load [of parishioners and altar servers] from Lowestoft but marshalled the procession on a route which had not been taken before along the beach and erected an altar and tent at the front of a spacious, sloping field beside the sea, forming a natural amphitheatre.

Monsignor Davidson, founder President of the Guild of St. Felix and St. Edmund of East Anglia preached at the Mass concelebrated by Canons McBride of Norwich and Hulme of Sheringham. Also present were Frs. Bull of Ipswich, Sloan of Woodbridge, O'Hara of Bungay, Little of Beccles, Leeder of Norwich, Tomlinson of Lowestoft and Pritchard of Southwold and two visiting priests. Fr. Tomlinson assisted in the distribution of Holy Communion to 250 who were present."

In 1962 there was a complete redecoration of the Sanctuary of Our Lady's. This included the painting in colour of the Reredos and High Altar friezes and sculptures and the gilding of the Reredos edges, Litany of Loretto, the Benediction Throne and Tabernacle Angels in gold leaf, the latter completed generously by signwriter parishioner Gerard Howard. Previously they were all in plain white.

Fundraising in the 1960's and '70's was mainly devoted to the two Catholic Schools that became established then. There was an expanding parish population and in 1963, St. Edmund's R. C. Secondary School was opened with Mr. F. Devany as Head Teacher. The school served the R.C. parishes of Gt. Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Gorleston and Beccles and there was an 80% government grant taken up to finance the capital outlay, the rest being shared by the parishes.

On April 11th. 1967, St. Mary's R.C. Aided Primary School was opened to pupils at Kirkley Cliff, Lowestoft, on part of the Convent School Playing Field. The site had formerly been occupied by St. Luke's Hospital but this had been requisitioned by the Admiralty in 1939 and had not been used since

Shrine at Walsingham Slipper Chapel. In those days there was just a small wooden covered outdoor altar in a meadow by the road next to the Slipper Chapel in and around which the pilgrims would gather for Mass and Benediction. Special trains would bring pilgrims from all over the country and halt on the line over the field in front of the Slipper Chapel. East Anglian pilgrims gathered in Walsingham Friday Market place and processed the mile and a quarter to the Slipper Chapel along the country lanes reciting the rosary and singing hymns.

Lowestoft Parish also supported the annual Pilgrimage to Dunwich initiated in 1927 by the Guild of St. Felix and St. Edmund but interrupted during the war. These were popular



Our Lady's before redecoration c1951

the end of the war. It was bought by the nuns in 1955 and demolished to make way for a playing field and tennis courts.

The new Primary School was officially opened by the Rt. Rev. Charles Grant, Bishop of Northampton, who led a procession from the Convent to the new school which he blessed. Speakers at the ceremony were the Bishop, Mr. J.P.G. Dunne, Chairman of Governors, Fr. Tomlinson and the Mayor Mr. A. Horton. Sister Gabriel was the first Head Teacher. The architects were Messrs. Johns, Slater and Howards and the builders were Middleton & Co. of Gt. Yarmouth. At the opening ceremony Mr. Dunne remarked on the faith that the Sisters had in the Primary School Project. He did not believe the parishioners and their friends would let them down. There was no government grant for the outlay but there would be aided status for all necessary future structural replacements and maintenance. The cost was to be borne equally between the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur and the Parish.

Many a dance and social was run by the specially formed Crusader Club to raise funds for the school. It was not till the demise of the Convent School itself in 1973 and the subsequent sale of the old boarding school buildings and new science block to property developers (who later built Glenwood flats) that the Sisters paid off their half of the debt. In so doing the interest burden was considerably reduced which helped the parish to pay off the debt more quickly.



Bishop Charles Grant at St. Mary's Primary School -1967



St. Mary's R.C. Aided Primary School, Kirkley Cliff (right). Back (left) is St. Mary's Convent behind which towers Glenwood flats built c.1979 on the site of the former Convent School.

During these transactions the Convent School Hall was purchased by Fr. Tomlinson for the Parish but was never used and was sold by the Diocese in 1988 and is now the site of Elizabeth Court.

Mr. J. A. Fox, B.A. succeeded Sister Gabriel as Head Teacher in 1976. Mr. P. George became Acting Head Teacher in 1987 while Mr. Fox was on a two year secondment and Miss B. Edwards, a former pupil of St. Mary's Convent School, became Head Teacher in 1989. In 1991 the school roof coverings were completely replaced and new

double-glazed windows were installed throughout to improve efficiency and security. The covered main entrance has been enclosed to form a reception area and the whole school has been completely repainted throughout in 1992 and is having an extra classroom built by March 1993. In June 1992 the school celebrated its 25th. anniversary with a series of events for past and present staff and pupils.

Father Tomlinson's parish increased suddenly in 1963 when Her Majesty's Prison, Blundeston came into operation. The prison has Catholic, Anglican and Free Church Chaplaincies. Also in the parish was the Lowestoft Hospital, now for the elderly and infirm and the Lothingland Hospital for the Handicapped at Oulton, now to be sold and the inmates rehoused in modern bungalows. Fr. Tomlinson also served as Chaplain to the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur at the Convent and to the French Port Consulate.

Active parish groups in 1973 included the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, The Knights of St. Columba, the Catholic Women's League, the Catholic Needlework Guild, the Guild of St. Stephen, St. Nicholas' Home Circle, the Catholic Youth's Own Discussion Group, and social groups for Old Tyme Dancing, Whist Drives, Football Club and Ladies Keep-fit Club, not forgetting the choir, St. Mary's Convent and St. Mary's Primary School.

Newer groups founded in the 1970's were the Stella Maris Young Wives, the Stella Maris Pilgrimage Trust, and local groups of the Legion of Mary, Handicapped Children's Pilgrimage Trust and Pax Christi. Non-denominational groups well supported by the parish were the St. Mary's Day Centre for the Elderly and the Lowestoft Life (Save the Unborn Child) Group.

In 1973 the centenary of Catholicism in Lowestoft was marked by a Mass of Thanksgiving on the Feast of the Beatified Martyrs of England and Wales. It was the first concelebrated Mass to be offered at Our Lady's and many priests and friends connected with the Parish were present. A talk on the history of the Parish had been given by Fr. Tomlinson the previous evening and an exhibition of this and the works of the Parish groups was on show in the Stella Maris Hall.

It was in 1873 that the first netloft was secured for regular Masses to be offered in the town on the corner of Raglan Road and Raglan Street on the site used by Maconochies, which became a car park in front of the old Bally Shoe factory and is now a new office block for Hoseason's. Father Kenneth Chapman, a Lowestoftian who used to serve at Our Lady's as a boy, as did his father before him, read the Gospel. Bishop Alan Clark, in his address, said he had that day knelt at the tomb of St. John Southworth and had thanked God for such men. His martyrdom had borne fruit and now we in our turn must give thanks to God and bear witness in our daily lives to see that the gift of faith is passed on to future generations.

For this first concelebrated Mass the long procession of altar servers, priests and Bishop was attended by a guard of honour of the Lowestoft and Gt. Yarmouth Knights of St. Columba whose provincial officers Bro. Joseph Salmon and Bro. Jim Bartlett led the procession into the church. The organist was Mrs. Freda Brooks and the choir was led by Sister Maria Goretti.

The Master of Ceremonies, Mr. Alfred Scarff read out a warm congratulatory greeting from the Rector of St. Margaret's Church, Canon Douglas Caiger, before Mass began. After Mass a grand buffet was enjoyed by the congregation courtesy of the Catholic Women's League and many friendships were renewed and memories exchanged. The wooden altar used since the decrees of the Second Vatican Council (1963 – 65) revised the liturgical rites, was placed outside the sanctuary on this occasion. This altar was used until the permanent altar

was built when Fr. Sketch had the sanctuary remodelled. The wooden altar was then installed at St. Nicholas chapel when Holy Communion under two species was introduced in 1986.

Mr. C. M. Mitlehner was ordained Deacon at Our Lady's on 21st. December 1975 by Auxiliary Bishop Mahon of Westminster assisted by Father Paul Hypher. Mr. Mitlehner assisted the Parish Priest in the distribution of Holy Communion, preaching and visiting the sick. He had a special interest in the caring work of the local St. John's night shelter for the homeless working with other Christians on this project.



Sister Maria Goretti – a popular teacher at the school and well known choir leader at Our Lady's.



St. Mary's Primary School – Mr. J.P.G. Dunne, Chairman of the Managers, presents seconded Headteacher Mr. J. A Fox with a leaving present at a leaver's party organised by Mr. P. George, Acting Headteacher (right)



First Concelebrated Mass at Our Lady's with Bishop Alan Clark – 1973

Walsingham on the altar. To prepare for the papal visit pilgrims from Lowestoft attended the Annual Diocesan Pilgrimage to Walsingham and prayers were offered by Bishop Alan for the forthcoming visit of the Pope. On this occasion the pilgrims also witnessed the consecration of the Altar of the new Chapel of Reconciliation.

On 21st May 1982 Fr. Tomlinson celebrated his Golden Jubilee as a priest. About twenty priests came from afar to attend the Mass of Thanksgiving. The Rt. Rev. Bishop Alan Clark was the principal celebrant and he told the large congregation that Fr. Tomlinson, aged 75, had preached the Gospel to generations of people, and they had cause to thank him. When he came to Lowestoft he had quietly and steadfastly re-built the war-damaged church and more recently helped to restore the church to its original beauty. He added, "All of us priests here today long to have something of his steadfastness, which is something the whole town admires."

The Bishop read out a letter sent to Fr. Tomlinson from the Vatican thanking him for his long years of service. Lunch was served for the clergy at the Victoria Hotel and in the evening there was a reception at the Primary School after a Parish Mass at Our Lady's and Fr. Tomlinson was presented with a cheque for £3,000 as a gift from his parishioners. He was invited to plant a tree at the school to mark that happy day.

Later in the year a reception was held for Fr. Stephen Raynor in the Stella Maris Hall, a dinner having been held for the retiring priests and the Parish at Hedley House in September. Miss Bridget Hickey, priests' housekeeper, was presented with a music centre from a parish collection in appreciation of her unstinting work for the Parish.



Fr. Raynor, Fr. Tomlinson & Bridget Hickey, at Hedley House with the Knights of St. Columba 1982

1982 was an eventful year. It saw the completion of the sealing of the roof and the internal redecoration of Our Lady's. Special occasions included the parish celebrations of Fr. Tomlinson's Golden Jubilee, the visit of His Holiness Pope John Paul the Second to England, Fr. Stephen Raynor's farewell to Scotland, Fr. Cansdale's arrival from Rome, Fr. Tomlinson's retirement to Gunton and Fr. Sketch's arrival from Ipswich.

51 parishioners were drawn in the ballot to receive tickets for the celebrations at Wembley Stadium where His Holiness offered Mass with the statue of Our Lady of

ANTHONY EDWARD SKETCH 1982 -

Father Sketch arrived as Parish Priest in October 1982. He directs the Annual Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes and is an International Director of the Shrine. Much has been accomplished in the decade of Fr. Sketch's ministry at Lowestoft and there have been many notable events. He has been assisted by three curates, Father Peter Cansdale for nearly eight years, Father Adrian Gates for one and a half years and Father James Caulfield who came in March 1992.

One of the first tasks for Fr. Sketch was to renovate the Presbytery. It was in this renovation that an old Parish scrapbook came to light in the Presbytery with press cuttings of the early days of the Parish. It was the source of much inspiration for the Stella Maris Souvenir Album published in 1986 to commemorate the opening of the new Stella Maris Hall and for this present work commemorating the restoration of the church tower in this the ninetieth anniversary of the opening of the church. Elections were held in 1983 to determine the composition of an advisory Parish Pastoral Council to assist Fr. Sketch in Parish matters and the following people were elected to serve on the first council:

Mr. A. Walmsley (Chairman), Sr. Mary Oliver (Sec.), Mrs. W. McFaul (Liturgy Chairman), Mr. M. Garrett (Fabric Chairman), Dr. J. Salmon (Finance Chairman), Mr. C. Brooks (Social & Youth Chairman), Mr. J. Fox (Lit.), Mrs. M. Hunt (Lit. & Finance), Mrs. M. Nichols (Fab.), Mr. T. Kelly (Fin.), Mr. M. Heil (Youth), and Mr. M. Dunne (Fin.).

The committees and Chairmen were determined at the first meeting.

The main project of the Council was to review the fabric of Our Lady's and plans for the remodelling of the sanctuary. It was decided to keep the beautiful Reredos and High Altar but to raise the overall floor of the old sanctuary by one step and to introduce an extra step at the previous level extending as an apron in front of the Altar rails which would be removed to open up the whole area. The pulpit was to be re-erected as an ambo one step above the new sanctuary level and entered directly from it, not from outside as before. On the other side of the new altar step would be the baptismal font repositioned from the baptistry. The statue of St. Joseph and its plinth would have to be re-positioned elsewhere. The setting having been accomplished, the main feature would be a new stone altar located centrally just inside the raised floor of the sanctuary and built of matching stonework and supported on four pillars.

The remodelling took place in late 1984 and at the same time the opportunity was taken to completely rewire the electrical circuits and install new floodlighting in the nave and on the sanctuary so that the Benediction Throne, the Tabernacle, the new Altar, the Reredos, and the Altar steps could all be spotlighted at the appropriate time. The whole sanctuary area and side chapels were covered with a gold coloured carpet, which today, eight years later, still gives a most beautifully-enriching, unifying effect. At the same time the organ was completely dismantled and renovated with one or two alterations, the whole work being completed in time for Christmas.

The new Altar was consecrated by the Rt. Rev. Alan Clark D.D., Bishop of East Anglia on Saturday 20th. July 1985 during a pastoral visitation which included Confirmation at Blundeston Prison and also at Our Lady's the following day. The Mass at the Consecration was for the Dedication of an Altar and Fr. Sketch produced a

souvenir booklet explaining the rites of Sprinkling, Deposition of the Relics, Anointing, Incensing and Lighting of the Altar. The twelve members of the Parish Council lit the Consecration Candles around the Church. Bishop Clark said that the Altar symbolized Christ for us. The relics entombed are of St. Maria Goretti, martyred just after the opening of the Church and canonised in 1950.

Christmas 1985 was a special occasion as it happened to be 100 years since the first sung midnight Mass of Christmas celebrated by Fr. Scott at the Carpenter's Shop Chapel in Clapham Road. Our Lady's was tastefully decorated with seasonal boughs by Mary Catling and Jenny Dowson, the church having been cleaned throughout by members of the C.W.L. and the K.S.C. The inside and outside crib scenes had been erected by the Knights

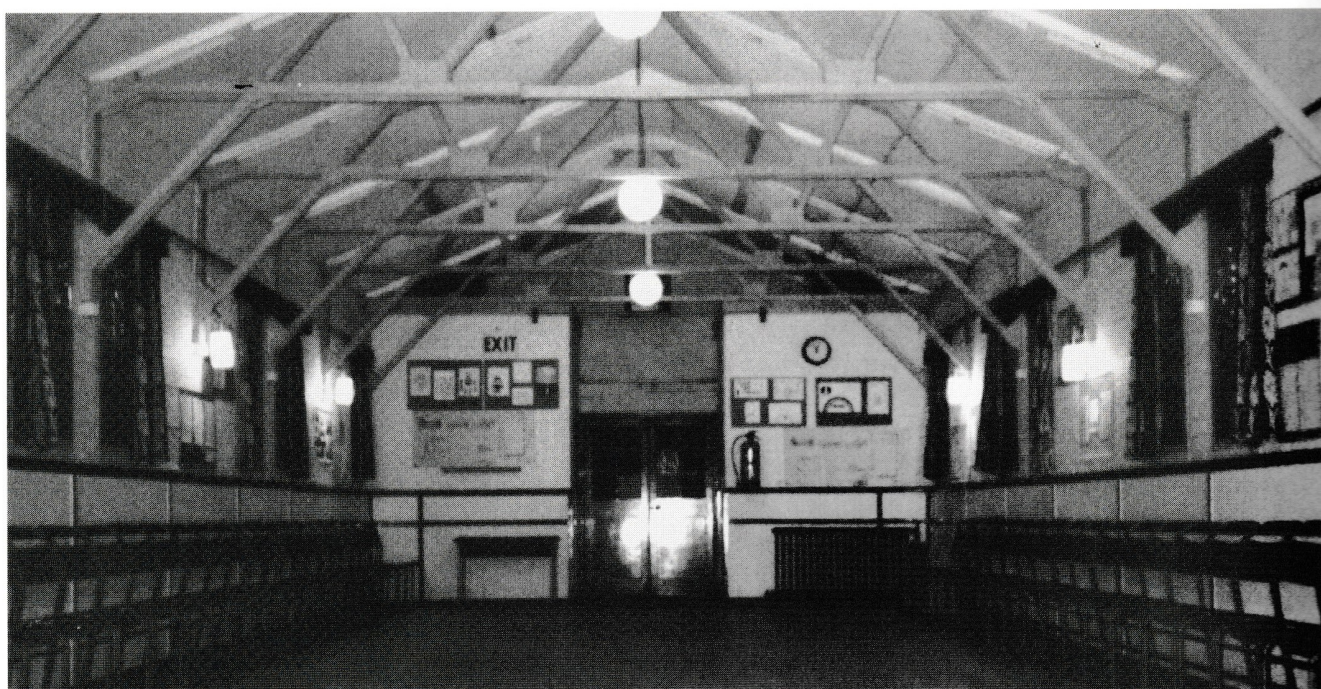


Fr. Tomlinson wins a bottle at the Centenary Social 1986 in the old Stella Maris Hall. His work "Stella Maris" can be seen on the wall. John Earley is making the draw while Fr. Sketch looks on.

who also ushered at the Mass. The organist Mrs. Freda Brooks led the congregation in the singing of carols. The procession to the crib with Fr. Sketch carrying the bambino was the prelude for the Mass to begin. The Mass was concelebrated by Fr. Sketch, Fr. Cansdale, Fr. Tomlinson and Fr. J. Prior, one of the two priest sons of Mr. and Mrs. J. Prior, parishioners at St. Nicholas Chapel. Readers were Mrs. Marie Risebro and Mary Sykes (Chairman of Lowestoft and District Council of Churches). The Gospel was read by Fr. Cansdale. Mr. C. Brooks led the congregational singing and Mr. M. Fathers was Master of Ceremonies. In his homily Fr. Sketch spoke of the unchanging essence of the Mass in the changing and more favourable ecumenical climate of our time. He prayed that all Christians would grow in the Spirit to form a more united Church.

On January 4th. 1986 the last official function was held in the old Stella Maris Hall before demolition in February. A cheese and wine was held on the exact date of the first ever Parish social held 100 years previously. A history of the Parish was exhibited by the author and the excellent fare was prepared by Jenny Dowson and Mary Catling.

It was a nostalgic occasion particularly for Mrs. Anne Tucker who, since the opening of the Hall in 1949, had always been active in participating there in fund-raising events for the church, as so many have been.



Old Stella Maris Hall 1986

The increasing role of the laity has been a feature of Church life in latter years and in 1986 the Lay Readers of the Word of God were formally dedicated for the first time during Mass. The Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist were also installed to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds to the faithful and to take Communion to the sick or housebound. From time to time special days have been set apart to reflect on these ministries by those involved.

On Sunday 13th. July 1986, the foundation stone of the new Stella Maris Hall was blessed by Fr. Tomlinson in a ceremony after 10.30 a.m. Mass in the company of Fr. Sketch, Fr. Cansdale, Parishioners and guests. The new hall, costing £50,000, was designed by Boris Kaye R.I.B.A., surveyed by Ralph A. Castleton F.R.I.C.s., and built by M. Oakes Ltd.

It had its first public use on Wednesday 26th. November 1986 when it was used for refreshments after an evening of music in the



Fr. Tomlinson blesses the foundation stone of the new Hall 1986

church with the Wrentham Town Band and an organ recital by Mr. John Wilkins, Our Lady's organist in the late 1980's. It was the second such evening held in the Church, following a memorable concert held in June 1985.

The hall has one large multi-purpose room with a stage at one end that can be used as a separate meeting lounge behind curtains. There is a kitchen with two serving hatches. A corridor leads from the vestibule where toilets are situated, the first one designed for wheelchair use. Access is by steps and a ramp to a covered porch which, in 1988, linked into the church by a direct doorway via the old baptistry. All heating and lighting is electric and was installed by Anglia Contract Electrical Ltd. There is a store and two emergency exits to the hall and space for a patio at the rear of the hall with a garden for summer use. Extra storage space demanded by users led to a garage store being erected at the rear in 1988.



Bishop Alan Clark and Fr. Sketch at the opening of the new Stella Maris Hall in December 1986.

The new hall was officially opened by Bishop Alan Clark in December 1986 when he unveiled a brass plaque on the stage commemorating the event.

The hall has made a splendid setting for many memorable functions in the first six years of its existence and is in constant demand for meetings and special events from parish societies and clubs and individuals in the community. It is also used for part of the church's liturgy on Palm Sunday and the Easter Vigil service and the stage has been the setting for the Children's Liturgy of the Word at 10.30 am Mass since the Sunday School was introduced in October 1989.

The Church's liturgical expression and worship including regular Pilgrimages to Walsingham and Lourdes and participation in ecumenical activities and services and the ongoing functions and meetings of the many parish groups prove parish life is varied and vibrant. Some of the more notable events in the life of the parish family from 1987 to 1992 were the following:

1987 – New Parish Councillors elected are Mary Catling, Eric Mingay, Catherine Mutch and Kathleen Wilton; Passion Drama rehearsals; Inauguration of Mother and Toddler Group meetings; Ecumenical Passion Drama in town centre on Good Friday and in costume for Easter Sunrise Service at Ness Point; Golden jubilee of the marriage of Dr. Stephen and Dorothy Nicol with testimony by Fr. Tomlinson; Diamond Jubilee of six Sisters of St. Mary viz. Sisters M. Rose, Clare, Dorothy, Michael, Magdalen and Theodore; Parish Dance featuring the 'J' Sound; Altar Server's Rally; Silver Jubilee of Father Sketch; Lowestoft Club for the elderly have use of the hall till their new premises open, Summer Fayre raises £1230; K.S.C. Meritorious Award to Dr. Joe Salmon, Christmas Bazaar raises £1140 and Carols at Christmas.

1988 – New Parish Councillors elected are Paul George, Dr. Noel MacDonald, Pat Walmsley and Sister Mary Joan; Pentecost Prayer and Praise March; Parish Luncheon; Safety reconstruction of the top of the church tower £15,000+; Summer Fayre raises £1702; Farewell party for Sister Mary Goretti; New Diocesan Law on notification of Marriage giving at least six months prior notice except for a grave and reasonable cause; Sister Mary Bridget leaves for Liverpool; Meritorious award K.S.C. reception for Frank Mooney; Visitation by Bishop Alan Clark and Confirmation (confirmands prepared by group led by Sister Mary Paul); Christmas Bazaar.

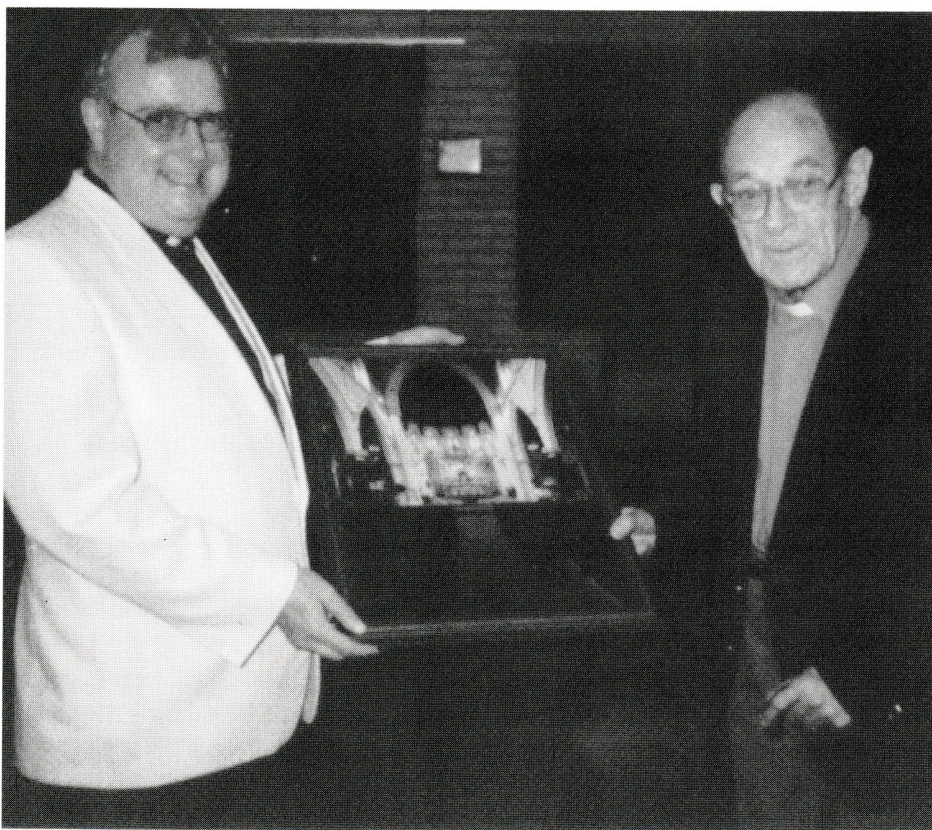
1989 – New Parish Councillors elected – Ann Fowler, Diana Garrett, William Graham and Anthony Lyons; Transformation of church porch into Narthex oratory; Ordination of Father Bernard Heath by Bishop Alan Clark; Newly appointed Headteacher Miss Beryl Edwards commences at St. Mary's Primary School; Week of Eucharistic Celebrations as all Diocese priests on retreat with Bishop; Reroofing of the Presbytery; Summer Fayre raises £1504; First Open Deanery Council Meeting – Agenda to discuss 'Evangelisation' led by Gorleston Dean Father Tom Murray; Sisters announce departure from Convent next year; Bequest to Church of £2450 from the late Eileen Hayhoe; Christmas Bazaar raises £1350; Requiem Mass for Sister Mary Joan.

1990 – Sisters of St. Mary Mass of Thanksgiving; Father Sketch elected chairman of Christians Together in Lowestoft and District at the A.G.M. of the Lowestoft Council of Churches; First Deanery family day held at St. Mary's Primary School, Lowestoft; Summer Fayre raises £1400; 'Bene Merenti' medals awarded to Miss Bridget Hickey and Mr. John Dunne; St. Mary's Convent closes; Father Peter Cansdale leaves Lowestoft to become Parish Priest of Cromer; Father Adrian Gates arrives as assistant priest newly ordained; Induction of Father Sketch as Chairman of Christians Together in Lowestoft; Golden Wedding celebration of Mary and Gunton Jones at Our Lady's; Christmas Bazaar raise £1187; Golden Wedding celebration of Michael and Terry Cahill at St. Nicholas.

1991 – Epiphany Vigil for the Decade of Evangelisation at Our Lady's; First parish inter group quiz evening; Reroofing and replacement of windows at St. Mary's Primary School at cost to parish of £30,000+; Ecumenical service to celebrate the Ascension on St. Mary's School Field; Base of pillars in church restored; Bishop Clark's Visitation and Confirmation; Autumn Fayre raises £810; Christmas Lottery raises £241.

1992 – New Parish Councillors elected – Peggy Cumby, Avril Zajdek, Howard Rochford; Father Sketch appointed Dean of Gorleston Deanery (renamed Coastal Deanery) in succession to Very Rev. Thomas Murray; Farewell to Father Adrian Gates to Cambridge; Welcome to Father James Caulfield from Cambridge; Restoration of brick and stonework of the church tower at a cost of £95,000+; First open general meeting of the Parish Council; Diamond Jubilee celebrations of Father Tomlinson;

Introduction of church souvenirs for sale to raise funds; Second annual parish inter group quiz; 3rd. Annual Coastal Deanery parish outing at St. Mary's School; Summer Fayre raises £2600; Eleventh year of annual Suffolk Historic Churches Trust sponsored Bicycle ride when riders visit Our Lady's and this year St. Nicholas for the first time; Mary Hunt, member of East Anglia Diocesan Ecumenical Commission and former parish councillor, elected Vice Chairman of Christians Together in Lowestoft and District, nominated as Chairman for next year; Sponsored Sing-a-thon to raise funds for the church tower; North Suffolk Youth Orchestra Concert in Church, Sunday Mass televised live by Anglia Television under guidance of Fr. Tony Rogers, annual Christmas Carol Service of St. Mary's Primary School at Church, Cantorus concert in Church followed by mulled wine, Stella Maris Bazaar including Traidcraft stall run by Francine Nahai, Sponsorship and sale of Parish Souvenir History Album.



Fr. Sketch presents Fr. Tomlinson with a framed picture of the Church of Our Lady Star of the Sea on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of his Ordination to the Priesthood 1992.

The source of most of this information comes from the file of parish bulletins written by Father Sketch and from memento programmes he has composed to mark special church occasions. Memorable occasions are also recorded by parishioners in the much valued Parish Magazine edited by Jenny Dowson which started as bi-monthly Parish newsletters by the author in 1985. Articles by priests and parishioners in this book are reproduced from these sources as for instance this article penned by Mary Catling of the Parish Social Committee in 1987:

"THE CELEBRATION OF FATHER SKETCH'S SILVER JUBILEE –
This joyous occasion took place on Wednesday June 17th. The church was cleaned and bedecked with flowers in welcome for Father Anthony, his family and his friends.

The Mass of Thanksgiving began

at noon. Tony Walmsley read from the Old Testament and Michael Sketch read from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Bishop Alan Clark spoke gently in his sermon of Our Lord and of the Priesthood in words of encouragement to Father Anthony and the forty five brother priests also present. Bidding prayers followed and then the concelebration of the Eucharist with the priests in a semi-circle about the altar. The final hymn resounded as the priests processed out of the church re-echoing Our Lady's words – "Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord". The Mass was followed by a luncheon in the Stella Maris Hall for invited guests.

In the evening the Parish welcomed Father Anthony, his family, Father Tomlinson, Father Cansdale and friends to a buffet reception in his honour in the lovely new hall where he was presented with a carriage clock, a silver wine taster and a dozen selected bottles of wine. After cutting a cake made in the form of an open prayer book, Father Anthony mingled with parishioners and friends before taking his leave, no doubt to reflect on all that had happened during the day. It was a time which I am sure he and those present who shared his happiness will never forget."



Fr. Sketch concelebrates his Silver Jubilee Mass with Bishop Alan Clark and brother priests.

Sister Bridget (nee Folkard) wrote this final paragraph in a letter to all parishioners from her Mission Address in March 1987 after a visit to her former home parish of Lowestoft:

"Soeurs de Sainte Marie, Rusasa, BP45, Ruhengeli, Rwanda, Central Africa.

...I thank God for everything in the parish that is old and new, for faithfulness to the past, steadiness in the present, openness to the future. I thank God for the Eucharistic Ministers. They are a sign of our faith in the Church, in her wisdom and power to COMMISSION lay people in this work.

"The Church confides to you what she holds as most precious...and this commissioning calls forth from you great purity of heart, great Eucharistic love and prayers of Adoration...." (From the Rwandese commissioning service.)

The changes in the church sanctuary are also a call, not only to admire the beauty, but to be drawn into the heart of the Eucharistic love, the offering of Christ to the Father and to all men. His love is not less than absolute, nor can ours ever be. With deepest gratitude to you all, and to Him who can do more than we can ask or imagine..(Ephesians 3: 20-21)"

Dorothy Fathers wrote "A PARISHIONER'S THOUGHTS" in the Easter 1989 Magazine concerning the Ordination of a well respected Lowestoft parishioner:

"God's Spirit is in my heart,
He has called me and set me apart."

These two little lines from a very well known hymn could never have been so significant as when used at the Ordination of the Reverend Bernard Heath on Saturday 4th. March 1989.

I have never before been fortunate enough, although I am, alas, no longer young, to witness an Ordination, and so, approaching this one with an open mind, I was completely unprepared for just what it entailed. I knew, without doubt, that it was an event not to be missed, for here was a man a great many of us had known from boyhood – some even attended the same school – who was about to commit, with much love and deep humility, the remainder of his life to the service of God.



Fr. Sketch cuts the cake at the Parish Reception to celebrate his Silver Jubilee

Just as Jesus Christ called his disciples sending them out to share his priesthood, so he called our Bernard, asking him to "Follow Me" as he did them; such a long time ago.

I think we all felt, unreservedly, a deep sense of pride and thankfulness to our Father, that not only had Bernard been chosen from among us, but that he had so willingly and humbly answered the call to "Feed my lambs", and we prayed earnestly that he may be given the grace and health to carry out his new priestly duties for many years to come.

For myself, the events of that afternoon were a revelation. From the entry of the bishop, clergy and altar servers to the bishop's final blessing, the dignity, commitment and mysticism of the Rite of Ordination held me enthralled.

Every single part of the ceremony, I realised, held a deeper meaning than I could necessarily understand completely, but I felt very strongly and sincerely that the way in which Bernard was giving himself up so willingly to the service of God was, in a sense, the way in which I must give myself to Him. I thought of the times I had put God into second place and, feeling humbled and ashamed, made an urgent resolve, with God's grace, not to do so again. Father Bernard, our prayers go with you."

Father Sketch wrote the following introduction entitled "The Family of our Parish" to the order of service booklet on the occasion of the Ordination of the Reverend Bernard Heath by the Right Reverend Alan C. Clark, D.D. on Saturday 4th. March 1989 at the Church of Our Lady Star of the Sea Lowestoft:

"This day is unique in the life of our family: and what a joy it is to be able to welcome you all to share in our great joy.

We gather together as children of the one Father who has shown his love by sending us his Son, a Son who showed his love by laying down his life for us. So we come in thanksgiving for the ordination of one of our family and friends, who shows his love of God and us by giving his life to God and all his people. Filled with that same Spirit of Love let this day be one of thanks and joy for all of us to such a God of love.

The Lord calls each one of us to know, love and serve him in different ways: may our response ever be one of joyful generosity.

May each of us ever remember this day with great thankfulness and rejoicing and pray for Father Bernard Heath who has, today, come to share in the priesthood of Jesus, his Saviour, Lord and God."

Father Bernard Heath, who for many years was a member and secretary of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Conference of Our Lady Star of the Sea, described his Ordination in the Easter 1989 edition of the Parish magazine:

"Ordination to the priesthood -"How did you feel?" This is not an easy question to answer. I suppose it must be akin to the question "How did you feel on your wedding day?"

Any ceremony is charged with emotion; the more important the ceremony is to the individual, the greater are the emotional feelings that rise up in that person. Here was I, after first expressing my feelings of desire for the priesthood about fifty years ago, actually being ordained!

My pre-ordination retreat at Massingham the previous week had in itself been a wonderful and happy experience. It certainly prepared me both physically and spiritually. I experienced no nervousness as I processed down the aisle and entered the bench in front of my family. Why should I? I was, and am, confident that God had decided that this was the right time and place he had chosen for me. Bishop Clark, in spite of a severe attack of "American 'Flu" had come to ordain me and there too was Fr. Gary Dowsey as M.C., to guide me through the ceremony. Everybody in the parish had worked extremely hard organising everything, right down to the smallest detail.

Sitting listening to the readings I had chosen, I was thinking particularly during the Gospel, of the job I had given up and felt no regret, no sense of loss – it might almost have been another world, the experience of which I could use in my future ministry.

The actual ordination ceremony seemed to go very quickly. "What do I remember mostly?" I had been to ordinations before and heard the Litany of the Saints sung. It was hard to believe that now it was being sung, or rather prayed, for me, led by two great friends of mine from Ushaw College, Denis Norman (Hallam Diocese) with Ray Burke (Shrewsbury Diocese) accompanying him on the organ.

Big brother, Fr. Peter, got the vesting wrong during my diaconate ordination at Ushaw and left me struggling to get into the dalmatic. A chasuble is so much easier! This chasuble, a gift from my family and lovingly made (sweat, toil and tears, even blood – she pricked her finger!) by my loving sister Eileen Hood. Thus the vesting was quite an emotional moment. Fortunately Peter defused it by quipping, "Skin a bunny backwards!" (Our mother used to say "skin a bunny" whilst she prepared us for bath as toddlers.)

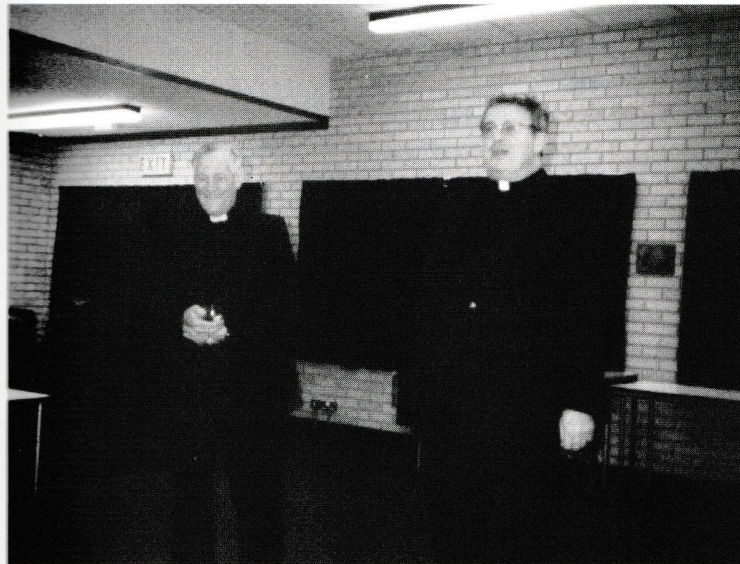
I knew my late parents were there, most particularly at the Consecration onwards when Christ is truly present on the altar with the whole Court of Heaven, "Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory..." (John 18:20). I had previously decided to avoid the temptation deliberately to think of them for fear of bursting into tears, although this did nearly fail during my first Mass.

The reception on Saturday evening was a large gathering of all my sisters and brothers of this our parish family of Lowestoft. I was absolutely overwhelmed by the love and appreciation showered on me – not really Bernard Heath but to the priesthood to

which I was the latest and most unworthy member.

Three weeks later, still up in the clouds but gradually coming down to earth to do the job I was ordained for, I look down and see my stole hanging down over my alb. Yes – it looks like my feet sticking out below – it feels like the same me inside.

However, since the Bishop laid his hands on me and anointed my hands, the real me has changed. I now share the priesthood of Christ for all eternity."



Fr. Bernard Heath and Fr. Sketch at the Parish reception.

It was a sad day when a letter addressed to the Dear Parishioners of Our Lady Star of the Sea was received from Sister Mary, Provincial Superior, at St. Mary's Convent, Lowestoft on 15th November 1989. It read as follows:

"It is with regret and real sadness that I have to tell you that the Sisters of St. Mary will be leaving Lowestoft during the coming year. We find it difficult any longer to maintain such a large building – also our direction as Sisters of St. Mary is towards smaller parish-based communities.

Lowestoft holds many happy memories for us, in particular the friendships established over the past sixty eight years.

We want to thank all of you who have helped and supported us during these years. Our thoughts and prayers will be with you all in the years to come.

It is likely that a small community of sisters will be here until June 1990."

The Sisters had come close to leaving Lowestoft once before in 1961 due to financial difficulties in running the Convent School but were persuaded by Father Tomlinson to carry on their mission for the good of the future of the parish which they did for a further three decades, one of their greatest achievements being partners with the parish in the establishment of St. Mary's Primary School in 1967 and continuing their fulltime missionary commitment on the teaching staff until 1988. Having become a more elderly and diminished order, they had to regroup and adjust their missionary activity around the country and, on 10th June 1990, Father Sketch recorded this "Loving Farewell":

"If today will have a certain air of sadness as we say a formal farewell to the Sisters, let us make sure that the abiding memories of the day, both for them and for each of us, will be memories of joy and thankfulness. Over the past 69 years they have taught many people many subjects, and how they will thank God for what they have learnt. What is of even greater importance, surely, is the lesson they have given to all who have met and known them. They have lived out the truth of the Gospel and shown it to be truly the 'Good News'. The love they have shown to all has dispelled so much misunderstanding in the past and ever been a source of healing and growth. Let us then, send them on their way with a loving prayer of thankfulness to God the Father and an eternal gratitude for their many years in our midst. Wherever they may go, whatever they may do, may they ever know the support of our love and prayers."

The Mass of Thanksgiving was followed by the unveiling of a plaque of Our Lady presented to the Church by the Sisters which was mounted in the wall by the old baptistry door entrance above a memorial stone donated for the occasion by Reg. Rivett. The Sisters, many of whom had travelled back especially for the occasion, were then entertained by the parishioners to a reception in the Stella Maris Hall.

Many former friendships and acquaintances were renewed, photographs exchanged and memories of the former Convent School recalled by former pupil Mary Nicholls (nee Aspinall), now Deputy Head of St. Mary's Primary School in a speech toasting the



Sisters of Mary at the unveiling of the plaque at Our Lady's – 1990

Sisters of St. Mary of Namur.

Earlier in the year, in April, Sister Bridget, who had attended St. Mary's Convent School and had eventually become a member of the Order, composed this personal recollection of thanks for parishioners, after a further visit to Lowestoft:

"The Lady has blessed you, the Star of the Sea,
She has blessed you, and leads us into her Son.

Only Mary can help us see the happiness and mercy which grace our lives.
Only Mary can help us live the joyful mystery of how much we are loved
by God and by others.

Only Mary can hold us in the darkness of our lives with no
explanation of the cross,
Save that THIS IS THE WAY, only to be endured in her Son.

Only Mary, transparent Mary, can open us to Glory
To the power of God that touches and transforms our lives even now,
So that we may believe our loved ones are with the saints,
Grief is not eternal, and holiness is God's call to all of us.

Only Mary is the blessing, the Star of the Sea,
Our guide, our comfort, our hope, our Mother.
She has blessed you all, every one of you,
For I have seen and touched the blessing of your honest lives,
And you have blessed ME with infinite kindness, infinite thoughtfulness.
You are rain to my roots. You have blessed me. Thank you all."

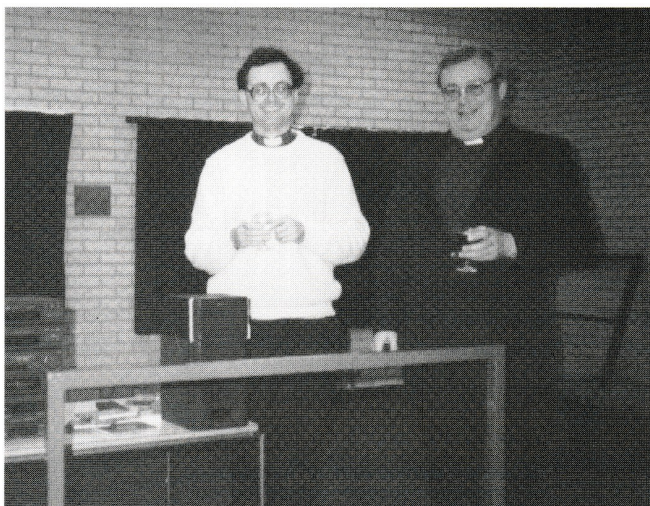
Soon Father Sketch was bidding another farewell to his well-respected assistant of eight years, Father Peter Cansdale, and asking for a warm welcome for his successor Father Adrian Gates, in the bulletin of the 9th September 1990:

"Farewell – Hail. Today we will say a fond farewell to Father Cansdale. It will start with a Mass of Thanksgiving at 10.30 am for all he has accomplished among us and continue with a social gathering with feasting for the journey as it were, after the Mass. (Keep it a secret but there will be a presentation as well!) The parting will be concluded on Tuesday when he drives off to Cromer to be welcomed by them as their new parish priest. May God truly bless him in his new ministry.

As one convoy sets off with Father Cansdale, another will arrive with Father Adrian Gates. One's first appointment as a priest is always rather daunting so may our welcome put his tremblings to rest! He will indeed be most welcome. Let us pray for great blessings upon his ministry among us. May they be a source of great joy, both for him and for us all. Do greet him warmly when you see him so that he may know that he truly has a new home among us."



Fr. Peter Cansdale by the Blessed Sacrament Altar



Farewell – Fr. Adrian Gates with Fr. Sketch

On 15th March 1992 Father Sketch wrote of a further change of assistant, bidding farewell once more:

"Farewell. This weekend will, I am sure, certainly have a very real element of sadness for us all. I feel that Father Adrian Gates will share in that sadness albeit that it is his leaving that will sadden us! Let it also be a weekend of true thanksgiving as he has contributed so much to the lives of us all during his time among us. Assuredly our prayers and affection will accompany him as he goes west to Cambridge.

Welcome Indeed. If I had to start this page in sadness, as it were, as Father Gates will be leaving us next Tuesday, we also have a new joy to await. Father James Caulfield will be coming to share in the life of the family of this parish on Wednesday. He will bring his own blessings. Let us pray that he also finds them a-plenty. May he soon settle down here and know that he truly does have a loving home among us.

Sunday 6th. December 1992, the feastday of St. Nicholas was a very special day in the life of the Parish. After several planning meetings of the liturgy committee, with Fr. Tony Rogers, Religious Adviser to Anglia Television, and Stephen Dean, Diocesan Musical Director, the week unfolded and with it two rehearsals under an increasing array of "hightech" gadgetry, thousands of feet of electrical cable and seventy odd lamps of the TV Company. The latter were suspended from scaffolding poles threaded through the holes of the side aisle rafters by some of the 30 technicians in attendance. After all was ready the Mass, celebrated by Fr. Sketch, was televised live to the nation at 11 am, the theme being the need to prepare for Christmas, to leave aside the materialism of the age and to make our hearts ready to receive Our Lord Jesus, who came to live as one of us.

The Master of Ceremonies of the Altar Servers was Michael Fathers, Processional cross - Ben Walmsley, Thurifer - John Brooks, Boat - Barry Sherwood, Acolyte No 1 - Greg Brooks, Acolyte No 2 - Paul Dowson, and other server - David White. Reader was Eleanor Lynch, Cantor - Christopher Brooks, Bidding Prayers - Mary Catling, Offertory - Jenny and Catherine Dowson. The children were led by Howard Rochford and John Sampson. Nicola Burt lit the candles on the Advent Wreath accompanied by her brother Andrew who received the Book for the Children's Liturgy of the Word in the Stella Maris Hall.

The Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist assisting Fr. Sketch in distributing Holy Communion to the Faithful at the Mass were: Paul Blythe, Clodagh Casolani, John Earley, Frank McFaull, Anne New, Marie Porter, Ursula Proctor, Marie Risebro, Anthony Walmsley, Patricia Walmsley and Avril Zajdek. Eucharistic Ministers distributing Holy Communion to the sick and housebound as an extension of the Mass were: Hazel Earley, Dorothy Fathers, Eileen Hood, Wyn McFaull, Philomena Mooney and Helen Selvage. Organist was Marie Long.



Our Lady Star of the Sea Church organist - Marie Long - December 1992

As the day was the patronal feastday of the Chapel of Ease at Blackheath Road, an informal social gathering was held at St. Nicholas, the first to be held there, which was well attended by the community of worshippers. This, despite wet weather conditions which did nothing to dampen the firework display which took place as planned. Inside, the pews were set aside and a fine shared supper, singing, and recitations were enjoyed by all and the event looks set to become an annual fixture, thanks to Fr. James Caulfield and his band of loyal supporters.

All in all, it had been a remarkable day for the Parish, demonstrating once again how vital and agreeable life is in this the community of our parish family.



Above: First Holy Communion Day 1986

Left: The Reredos and windows on the left rear of sanctuary

Right: Our Lady Star of the Sea – detail from decorated reredos panel.

Below: Fr. Sketch at the Church Crib Christmas 1982.

