

SAINT AUGUSTINES GREAT HOWARD STREET LIVERPOOL

A BRIEF HISTORY



By Jim Fitzsimons

Price £2.95

R i v e r M e r s e y



Map of the parish of Saint Augustines - 1906

Foreword

A sentimental and factual journal written for former parishioners and descendants to help them become aware of how their forebears struggled to develop what was to become the parish of St. Augustine.

It is hoped that the reading of this history will give some pleasure and enlightenment about the folk who lived in this small area of Liverpool called the parish of St. Augustine.

This History was mainly recorded by the author from archives and experiences in his youth, plus incidents as told by former members of the parish.

I would like the reader to become aware of the Liverpool Irish influence for the betterment of our city and country.

Jim Fitzsimons

Acknowledgments

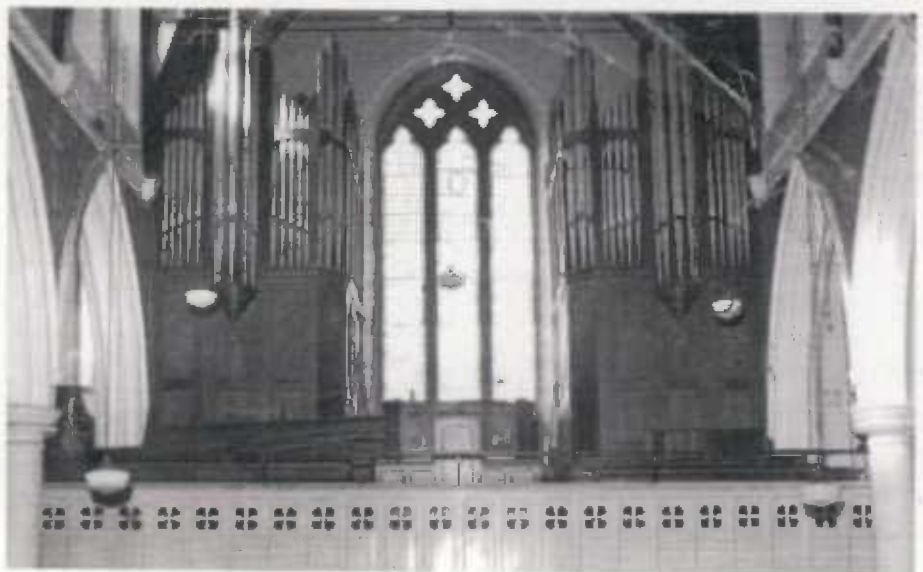
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The Altar of St. Augustines, noted for it's gold and gilt facing



The Choir Gallery

SAINT AUGUSTINES

(GREAT HOWARD STREET)

It seems so sad with the nearing of the 21st century that a more close and intimate recording of peoples origins, endeavours, and experiences has not been documented; how they lifted up their lives from abject poverty and obscurity from the mid-19th century, to be equal to their fellow citizens as we move forward into the new century.

The aim of writing this account is to try and present to the reader a picture of how one section of the inhabitants of an area in Liverpool overcame severe material handicaps in their way of life and those of the children who followed.

We must also remember that many other sections of our city had the same experiences perhaps worse, but one can only relate to our own area by facts as recorded and handled down by various stories of family experiences.

Thus why the parish of St. Augustine originated; by whom, where and when? How it existed with its poverty, sorrows, joys, births and deaths. The proud moments when its people achieved worthwhile causes for the improvement and happiness of all.

It is inevitable because of the circumstances during the mid-19th century that the people of Ireland are mainly involved in

this history, but that is inescapable, as almost 95% of the population of this small area of the St.. Augustine parish originally came from that country.

Prior to the formation of the Parish of St.. Augustine the history of the area is necessary for the reader to know and try to understand the kind of life the Irish immigrant from the middle and latter part of the 19th Century had experienced both physically and mentally.

The main influx of the Irish into Britain was during the potato famine and the years immediately after, continuing and slowing down up to the latter part of the 20th Century. The reason for the huge immigration from Ireland was basically political with little help for people during the famine years to the detriment of the Irish nation by successive British Governments.

There were Irish people arriving and settling in Liverpool prior to the impact of the famine that caused the huge exodus from Ireland. Thus in desperation and belief that a better life lay across the seas, it led to Liverpool in particular being used as a stepping stone to achieve that ambition.

Many thousands of the Irish after landing here, made bookings in various vessels and sailed away to the countries of their choice. It is also true that there were numbers of immigrants reaching Liverpool who had enough money to travel further on to America or elsewhere but were deceived and robbed by the con-men of the city. Others moved further on into other cities in England spreading out and perhaps settling where luck or opportunity took them.

Immigrants wishing to leave for America could book a passage at various agencies, one of which was in Dublin Street. An example of such bookings known as a Contract Ticket is quoted for six people aged from 18 years and older leaving Liverpool for New York on the 20th July 1857, travelling on the ship Harvest Queen, the total cost for this group being £22.10 shillings for steerage passage.

Apparently this particular vessel was of the better class being guaranteed to provide quantities of bread, oats, rice, potatoes, tea, beef, pork, water etc. Passengers had to provide their own eating utensils and bedding.

The then long voyage averaging many weeks would be a test of

Henry Boyd, 82, DUBLIN STREET, and 27, WATERLOO ROAD.
 OPPOSITE ANCHUTY RIVER DOCK.

C 263 PASSENGER'S CONTRACT TICKET.

For the Harvest Queen of Wm. Tomlinson, to take Passengers at Liverpool, for New York on the Saturday Day of July 1857.

Forwards that the Company named in the margin above is providing for a Steerage Passage to and from London on the Harvest Queen to United States in the City of Harvest Queen.

NAME	AGE	SEX	FARE
Thos Taylor	57	M	5/0
Agnes - do	58	F	5/0
James - do	20	M	2/0
David - do	18	M	1/8
John Robinson	40	M	4/0
Mary - do	40	F	4/0

Depart 1-0-0
 Balance 21-10-0 to be paid at
 Total 22-10-0

On behalf of HENRY BOYD of Liverpool
 Liverpool 14th July 1857

NOTE TO THE PASSENGERS.
 1. If Passengers desiring to book for other ports, or to book on any other day, or to book on any other ship, they must apply to the Company.
 2. Passengers should carefully study the conditions of their Contract Tickets, and the terms of the Regulations, before they book, and they must comply with the same.

A passenger contract ticket booked for America

endurance whilst suffering the often Atlantic storms and buffeting of the heavy seas, such was the experiences of those who were determined to improve their way of life.

As far as Liverpool was concerned it was mainly in this city where many of the immigrants, due to lack of finance to travel further had to stay. Over the years with the immeasurable guidance of their Catholic priests, the church was the hub whereby these people slowly and painfully bettered their living conditions and in the building of the churches and schools laid the foundations of a better life for their following dependants.

A quotation from *The Morning Chronicle* of 15th July 1850 reads thus:

“It is in the neighbourhood of the Waterloo and northwards to the Clarence Dock that the principal lodging houses for the poor emigrants are to be found, more especially around Dennison Street, Regent Street, Carlton Street, Porter Street, Vulcan Street which were off Great Howard Street - most of them of the filthiest kind, externally and internally. The wretched accommodation provided for the multitudes of emigrants that daily pass into Liverpool, to await the departure of the vessels by which they have secured their passage to America and the robberies of all kinds to which they are subjected to during their stay, are evils that the philanthropic citizens of Liverpool, who feel for the misery of their fellow creatures, might well hasten to remedy.”

Thus after disembarking from the numerous boats at the various docks in Liverpool they descended into the lodging houses or any other accommodation they could find to stay either permanently or temporary. So it was, that there were approximately 16,000 people living rough in the streets and areas of what was later to become the parish of St. Augustine.

Many died in these streets from hunger and fever caused by the overcrowded hovels, cellars and the unsanitary conditions, one may say they left one hell to suffer and die in another.

So, by reading the history of our St. Augustine Parish those of us who are the descendants of these people who left Ireland looking for a better life, should realise how their efforts by sometimes deprived and painful means have slowly enhanced the Irish and others in Liverpool.

A doctor W.H. Duncan succeeded in obtaining a Private Bill through Parliament to close these cellars but the entry of thousands of Irish into the city in 1847 dealt a shattering blow to such plans for these people flooded into any kind of shelter that could be found. Thus courts with cellars became densely overcrowded breeding sickness and fearful typhus, causing death amongst the hungry occupants.

THE PARISH OF SAINT AUGUSTINE

The formation of the Parish of St. Augustine was made at a meeting of parishioners in St. Mary's Highfield Street schoolroom on the 12th October 1848. The subject was to raise a memorial to the memory of the Benedictine monks who had died in that area of Liverpool with typhoid fever in 1847.

The fever was caused by the appalling overcrowding in the slums of the city, with reputedly 30,000 people dying.

Great Howard Street was chosen as the site for the new church because of the congestion already in this area and would be further increased by the building of the Clarence Dock. Many of the huge number of Irish immigrants were making their homes in these already overcrowded streets and courts. An ordinance map of 1848 shows that in the 20 streets of the future parish of St. Augustine there were 16,000 people.

At further meetings held in a warehouse at the corner of Chadwick Street and Great Howard Street it was decided to 'Erect a church to the late, lamented priests of St. Mary's'.

One year later on the 9th September 1849 the church of St. Augustine was opened as a Chapel of Ease and sometimes titled the 'Martyrs Church' as a tribute to the monks who died in the fever.

Because of the huge population of Irish now here, the church was so overcrowded that the doors were left open enabling the congregation to hear Mass whilst standing in Great Howard Street.

Quoting archive notes it is interesting that an ex-pugilist named Langham had originally bought the church site with the intention of building a boxing stadium. Langham also founded what was the St. Patrick Hotel - a public house in Regent Street - which had a statue of St. Patrick set into the outside wall, apparently as a sign of welcome to the people from Ireland as they stepped off the boats berthing in the nearby docks.

To say Mass the priest Father Cook who served the new St. Augustine Parish had to travel the half mile from St. Mary's Highfield Street but this was found to be inconvenient. Later he moved to a rented house near the church, the two parishes were then divided and Father Cook became the first parish priest of St. Augustine in 1849.

It is noted that this priest assisted by two others along with two maids were living on 15 shillings (75p) a week. Later Father Cook who in his nine years at the parish reduced the debt by £8,000.

Cost of Saint Augustines	£
Church and Land	6,894
Presbytery	1,479
Old School (approx)	3,900
Total	<u>12,273</u>

It is on record by the Liverpool Authorities that Father Cook was instrumental in preventing serious outrages during the 1855 bread riots. Bread was issued to the poor by charities and at times riots during the distribution took place, such was the poverty in areas of Liverpool.

Fever and other sicknesses were rampant during these times and sadly Father Cook contracted the fever and died after a few days illness. He is buried at Aigburth.

St. Augustines first school was built in Little Howard Street and opened in 1866. It comprised of a big cellar under what was later the parish hall but little is known about the original school and conditions of education other than the now parish hall and the large cellar underneath would have been used as classrooms.

During the Second World War our parish hall in Little Howard Street was known as Atlantic House and used as a meeting place for allied service men, mainly sailors, to enjoy an evening of relaxation. King George VI visited the hall in 1945.

In 1872 the parish priest Father Cooper, was running a night school for boys aged 12-18 years of age for four sessions a week, costing four pence. He made great changes in the old school, priests house, confessionals and sacristy.

Late in 1875 when Father Ross was parish priest, an interesting drama took place. The Liverpool School Board in the early days of its existence tried an experimental school to withdraw children away from denomination schools by charging just one penny per week.

This experiment was called the 'Love Lane Board School' and was situated at the back of the church in Love Lane, but after strong resistance by Father Ross who remonstrated that Catholic children would only attend a Catholic school, the Board School closed eight months later. This venture had cost £1,144. An editorial in the Daily Post stated that 'The Roman Catholics in the Love Lane district were not content with patronising this school'.

The year 1881 was the time when a local born priest Father Potter died of fever whilst caring for and carrying wretched people to the fever vans from the typhus ridden dens of Carlton Street. Some days, as many as 20 cases of fever sickness and death were recorded in the alleys and cellar courts of this street.

At the height of the epidemic fever huts had been erected in and near the areas of Chisenhale Street where the stricken were removed to, away from the hovels where they had existed in such sordid conditions.

Father C. O'Neil was parish priest for one year only from 1882. Followed by Father W. B. Rigby who remained until 1891. During his time at the parish, the church was redecorated and maintained, this was necessary due to the dust and smoke in this district. He was responsible for starting the gold gilt decor over the main altar which was so striking in appearance.

John O'Shea (1836-1922). For 32 years Mr. John O'Shea had been a prominent member of the parish being involved in the CYMS and many other institutions for the benefit of the people in the area. He lived in a small house-shop close to Spranger Street. Having a great love of his Irish birthplace and fellow

countrymen in Liverpool he was prominent in his efforts for the Nationalist Party and its principals, which at this time were part of the political scene in our city.

When in 1900 after becoming a City Councillor he joined the Housing Committee and strove for the re-housing of the dispossessed. Insisting that people be re-housed within reasonable distance of their work. John O'Shea and Alderman Austin helped in the decision for the then modern tenements to be built in Saltney Street.

It is interesting that John O'Shea was one of many people from humble origins living in this congested poor parish who reached prominent and civic recognition in the city of Liverpool. In 1906 he was made a Justice of the Peace.

Becoming almost completely blind and in poor physical health he died in his 87th year. Later a tablet was installed underneath stained glass windows in the church, inscribed with the efforts he championed for his fellow parishioners and citizens of Liverpool.

In the year 1897, Father Rathe became parish priest becoming a very important figure by his leadership in initiating the greatest progress of the people of St. Augustine.

He recognised that because the old schools of the parish were condemned by the Education Department, new schools were necessary. Thus in a pamphlet he appealed for help in raising funds for a new school; the foundation stone was laid by Archbishop Whiteside in 1896 and the school opened in 1897. The new school cost £6,000 and children of school age numbered 770.

The parish was indeed well guided by the efforts of this priest. Coming at a time of great distress, he guided the building of the new school, converted the old school into the parish hall and club rooms, renovated the presbytery, cleaned and redecorated the church and had electric light installed. Sadly Father Rathe died at the early age of 53 years, in 1911.

On September 19th 1899, St. Augustines parish celebrated its Golden Jubilee with a Pontifical High Mass attended by Archbishop Whiteside and in the sermon it was stated that in 1849 the parish cared for 16,000 souls. This was a tremendous amount of people and emphasises the intense overcrowding and pathetic conditions of the Irish immigrants, but now in 1899 at the Golden Jubilee celebrations the parish population was 4,000. Still big enough to cause overcrowding and poor living conditions.

At the celebration sermons a Dr. Larkin complimented Father Rathe and parishioners by saying 'The raising of such large sums of money in a district populated by poor dock labourers is an eloquent testimony to devoted and self-sacrificing labour'.

The years past with life's struggles under the guidance of a Fairfield born local priest Father T.B. McEvoy who in 1936 celebrated his Silver Jubilee as a parish priest. The streets were decorated with buntings, streamers festooned around cellar railings and lamp posts, donkey-stone kerbstones, shrines in windows, candles and fairy lights shining out into the darkened streets.

During his 25 years as parish priest, a debt of £3,000 on the school had been paid, stained glass windows installed in the church which had been redecorated, also the old roof had been replaced. Vestments and altar furniture renewed making the church one of the best equipped in Liverpool.

People celebrated with socials in the church hall and parties for the children in most of the cellar courts. Indeed it was a demonstration of love and respect for a priest whose leadership had guided this parish through some very difficult times.



Father McEvoy OSB

His initiative during the difficult time of the Police strike when the army used rifle fire in the area of Love Lane. The trauma during the General Strike of 1926, also the disappearance of the 'Irish Party' who had represented the interests of people in this area.

In the year 1936 as a gesture to their parish priest the CYMS (Catholic Young Men's Society) of the parish had an oak plaque mounted in the baptistry as a tribute to Father McEvoy's mother, inscribed as follows:

'In memory of Caroline Jane McEvoy, whose son, Dom Thomas Bede McEvoy, O.S.B. served this parish for 25 years, this Baptistery was restored and decorated in gratitude by members of the CYMS 1936'

This plaque still exists and is in the possession of the present owner of the site on which the church and presbytery once stood at the corner of Chadwick Street. Father McEvoy was ordained in 1899 and died when 86 years old.

Our parish was unique inasmuch that we were self-contained and could be called insular, perhaps like a small Irish village on the map of Liverpool. On the north and south there were deep belts of industrial buildings such as the huge Stanley Tobacco Warehouse and Bibbys, the River Mersey on the west side, with the Leeds and Liverpool canal separating us from the Vauxhall area. 'Over The Bridge' (See map of parish streets).

This isolation gave the parishioners a close concentration of family and parish pride also loyalty to each other, enough in later life to say in discussion we were pleased and honoured to be an 'Augustinian'.

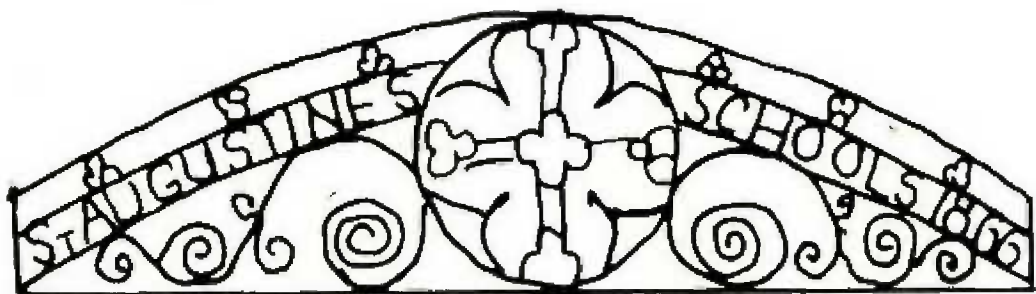
In the early 1900's the population of the parish fell to about 3,000 and remained so up to 1938, when the Minister of Health published a formal degree of demolition for the district. To quote the instructions given 'That this district was to become an industrial area'. Thus this was the start of the time when people thought about moving to new estates in outlying areas of

Liverpool. In 1939 when the Second World War started there were large numbers of residents still living in the parish who remained there until the end of the war, some losing their lives in air raids.

Many of the newly established parishes formed in new housing estates on the outskirts of Liverpool have greatly benefited by the know-how and organisation ability the people of St. Augustine took with them.

To end this abbreviated history of the parish from its formation in 1849, one in this modern age may find it hard to imagine how poverty-stricken the immigrants were, coming from various parts of Ireland and hoping for a better life when they finally settled in Liverpool, which in many cases was then little better than the country they had left.

Guided mainly by priests already nearby at St. Mary's, slowly over the years these people bettered themselves, sometimes against political and religious prejudice. They build up and acquired respect and dignity for themselves and their parish.



A picture of the tiled grill which was mounted over the entrance of the original school in Little Howard Street



Princess Walk



Court in Upper William Street



Upper William Street

THE IMMIGRANTS

Mother or 'Ma' as her family affectionately called her

Katie O'Riley sat on a wooden stool in the small rented cottage near Cavan Town in Ireland, the year was 1893 and she was eleven years old. She sat with her dress pulled over her knees whilst tears ran down her face, as she listened to neighbours discussing what to do with the humble pieces of furniture that were part of her home.

Her mother had died that morning and now she thought that she would perhaps die herself. Her step-father had died three years previously. He had been a good father to her - a widower with a son when her mother had married him. Now Katie felt she was all alone.

The only living relative was Tim Cain her half-brother, who like many Irishmen was in the British Army and serving in India. There was no way then for him to help in her unhappy plight.

After the funeral it was arranged by neighbours for Katie to work for a farmers wife just outside Cavan. At eleven years of age she was paid four shillings a month whilst working and lived at the farm.

Two years later Tim returned from India and was discharged from the army, settling down in Belfast picking up work where and when he could.

Katie, although now only 13 years old joined Tim in Belfast and for five years was a domestic servant to a business family who were very kind to her although she was of a different religious faith. It must be remembered that religious bigotry in Belfast is an unfortunate fact throughout its history. She often spoke about her happiness whilst working for this lady named Mrs Nolan.

On her day off from work and when he was also free, Katie and Tim would go walking in Central Park. He was very considerate and understanding and she loved him as he was her only relative.

When Katie was 18, she was walking alone in the park and met Richard a young soldier who was stationed in Belfast. She noticed when talking that he had big brown eyes and fell in love at first sight.

Katie and Richard were married in Belfast Cathedral. She was then aged 20 and Richard 22 when they made their vows. As the priest quoted the words "With all my worldly goods I thee endow", Richard had just one half-sovereign in his pocket.

At this time Richard was now in the British Army Reserves. After a month of marriage he was recalled to military service because the Boer War had started. There was then a long period without any communication from him or the army.

After inquiries made by Tim it was learned that Richard had been sent first to London and then onto South Africa to fight in the war against the Boers. During his absence Katie had carried on working in domestic service with Mrs Nolan her employer.

Some time later letters finally started to arrive from Richard. Katie was very pleased to receive in one letter some ostrich feathers which were then very fashionable.

After a further two years he returned from South Africa and was then discharged from the Royal Irish Rifles and returned to civilian life in Ireland.

Realising that it was a struggle to find work, Katie and he decided to emigrate and leave their country. Thus if not aware of the fact, the reader should know and picture the acute poverty a great number of the Irish people were suffering. Ultimately there was uplifting hope that the leaving of Ireland could make for a better life.

'Ma' was a fair-haired woman who laughed a lot but with a quick and fiery temper when roused, especially when 'Da' having been fortunate to have worked for a few half-days on the docks would then arrive home having had drink, which meant less money being spent on the children.

Father - or 'Da' as the family called him

Richard was born in 1879 near the village of Duleek close to the town of Drogheda in Ireland. He was the third son of a family of five children destined to work on the small farm for their living. Life was such that the land was too small for the growing family, so he like most youths realised he had to face up to the obvious and leave home to find some other means of earning a living.

His choice was to join the British Army. Aged 16 years he took what was called 'The Queens Shilling' and joined the Royal Irish Rifles whose headquarters were in Belfast. It was not unusual for Irishmen to join the army as their country was still a British colony, controlled from London. There were many army units throughout Ireland such as the Connaught Rangers, Dublin Fusiliers, Cork Volunteers, Munster Fusiliers etc. The army had the guarantee of adventure, uniform clothes, food, plus pay (which after deductions was a few pence per day) - luxury by normal standards for a country-born Irish youth.

Many Irish lives were lost in the British Armed Forces as the Empire was still expanding during the 19th and early 20th Centuries. As fate turned out Richard was to later fight in South Africa during the Boer War.

The last sight of his mother was to see her angrily waving a walking stick as he and other recruits were marched onto a train at Drogheda Station. One has to imagine the heartache of these Irish parents as they saw the constant flow of their children away from their lives.

Later when married to Katie the decision to leave Ireland was eventually made so he and Katie who was expecting their first child arrived in Liverpool.

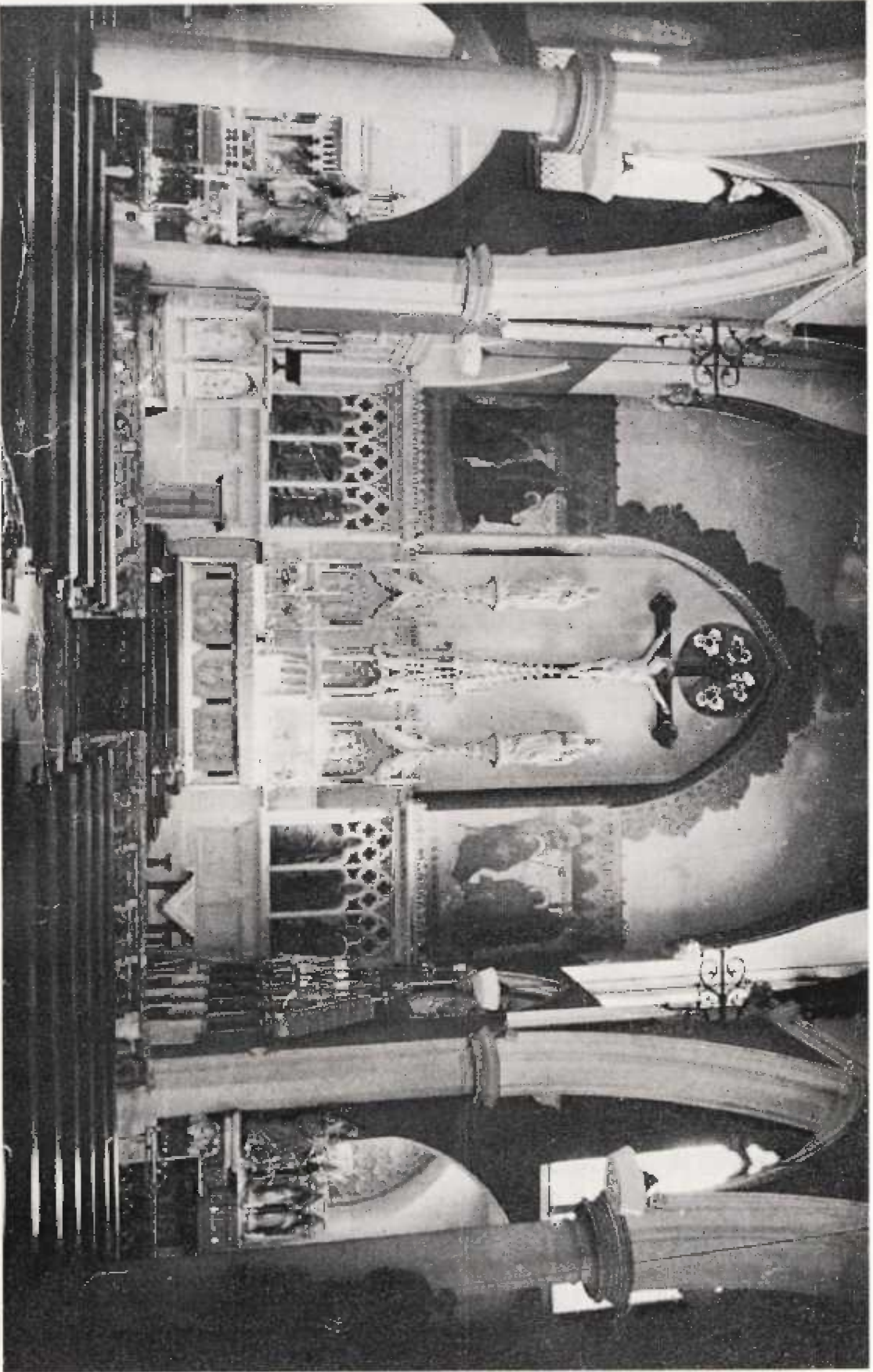
Leaving Ireland they had little more than sufficient money for their journey to Liverpool, where they found lodgings in Hunter Street. Work of any sort had to be found quickly, for Katie's baby was about due.

Not having any trade or specialist skills the average Irishman had the will to work with only his muscle strength as an asset. Employment at digging roads or on building sites and mainly dock labouring were a few of the heavy types of work sometimes available.

It must also be stated that this kind of work was casual - meaning that a man would be only employed for half-a-day or a complete day or days, controlled without question by the needs of an employer.

Nellie who was Katie's first child, was born in Brownlow Hill Hospital. As 'Ma' often told us, she was a beautiful baby having blonde hair and big brown eyes and Katie felt her life was complete. This child sadly died when five years old after contracting consumption which had a firm grip on the poor and overcrowded people of Liverpool.

By 1913 two boys and one girl were born and the family then moved to a house in Dublin Street off Great Howard Street, which they shared with an old couple. Later moving to Upper William Street into their own court house where a further four children were born. Thus they were now settled into the parish of St.. Augustine which at this time was firmly established.



St. Augustines Church interior

THE COMING TO LIVERPOOL

Before the middle of the 19th Century many of the Irish people were arriving in Liverpool, some to move on, but large numbers staying and hoping for a better existence.

In Liverpool at this time and during the following years, imports and exports were moving in and out of the port. It was good for business but unfortunately the number of people seeking employment far exceeded the work available.

The Irish were mostly of country-born stock. The minority had some skills, but the majority were suitable for physical work only. Desperate for work, any kind of employment was accepted. Road digging, building, dock labouring, anything that would earn money to keep hunger at bay.

At this time and for many years after, it was rare for a labourer to have a regular job whereby a family could plan an organised budget. Casual work was the norm with all its frailties and accepted by men eager to provide for their families.

Picture such men standing in lines, in or near the various docks, waiting for a ganger or boss to walk over to such a group and place a hand in turn on the shoulders of the men selected, thus indicating that they would be employed for that day or even a half-day.

Certain bosses knowing they only wanted what was known as a 'gang' would approach a group of dockers and instead of picking the twelve men required would throw the equivalent pay 'tallies' on the ground thereby forcing the men to scramble, some on their knees for the right to a days work.

This procedure happened on the occasions men were required to work at the docks - how humiliating and frustrating it was to be passed by - meaning he was still not hired. Returning home there would be dismay in the family - no work meant hard times.

These metal discs or 'tallies' which indicated work done for individual employers would be presented at what was known as a 'Clearing House' each Saturday morning, when dockers would queue up for payment. We had such a Clearing House in Vulcan Street.

It was unfortunate for these people that some employers took advantage of the situation by employing such workers at lower wages knowing that most of the immigrants would accept any conditions as long as they could work.

This acceptance of low wages caused other hazards as people employed previous to the coming of the Irish, were now forced out of reasonable wages into a 'Take it or leave it' situation. Thus a dislike of the immigrants grew in Liverpool and the surrounding areas.

Bringing with them their Catholic faith, having little financial security and living in degrading conditions, the Irish were written and spoken about as being of a lower class of human.

Some 19th Century observations on the Irish:

“Crowds of miserable Irish darken all our towns. The wild Milesian features, looking false ingenuity, restlessness, unreason, misery and mockery, salute you on all highways and byways. The English coachman, as he whirls past, lashes the Milesian with his whip, curses him with his tongue; the Milesian is holding out his hat to beg. He is the sorest evil this country has to strive with. In his rags and laughing savagery, he is there to undertake all work that can be done by mere strength of hand and back; for wages that will purchase him potatoes. He needs only salt for condiment; he lodges with his mind in any pig-hutch or dog-hutch, roosts in outhouses; and wears a suit of tatters, the getting off and on of which is said to be a difficult operation, transacted only in festivals and the high tides of the calendar. The Saxon man if he cannot work on these terms, find no work. He too many be ignorant, but he has not sunk from decent manhood to squalid apehood.”

Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism* (1889)

“The rapid extension of English industry could not have taken place if England had not possessed in the numerous and impoverished population of Ireland a reserve at command. The Irish had nothing to lose at home, and much to gain in England. These people having grown up almost without civilisation, accustomed from youth to every sort of privation, rough, intemperate, and improvident, bring all their brutal habits with them among a class of the English population which has in truth, little inducement to cultivate education and morality.

For work which requires long training or regular, pertinacious application, the dissolute, unsteady, drunken Irishman is on too low a plane. To become a mechanic, a mill-hand, he would have to adopt the English civilisation, the English customs, become, in the main, an Englishman. But for all, simple, less exact work, wherever it is a question more of strength than skill, the Irishman is as good as the Englishman. Such occupations are therefore especially over-crowded with Irishmen; hand-weavers, bricklayers, porters, jobbers and such workers, count hordes of Irishmen among their number, and the pressure of this race has done much to depress wages and lower the working-class. And even if the Irish, who have forced their way into other occupations, should become more civilized, enough of the old habits would cling to them to have a strong degrading influence upon their English companions in toil, especially in view of the general effect of being surrounded by the Irish.”

F. English

The Condition of the Working Class in England (1844).

It does not require a great deal of imagination to realise the hardship facing the immigrant in Liverpool, plus the sadness of leaving any folk back in Ireland and then struggling to exist in dreadful conditions against such pointed bigotry.



*The lower part of Saltney Street with dockers
waiting for the chance to work.*

Note the courts at top, tenements and cellared houses lower down - 1906

LIFE IN SAINT AUGUSTINES

(From the turn of the Century)

When in the early 20's - 30's, life was still harsh for most families of the parish. There had been the recent years after the so-called 1914-1918 'War to end all Wars' when families were still grieving over their dead, followed by the Police and General Strikes.

Most of the people of St., Augustines parish lived in the cellared streets off Great Howard Street. The streets were mainly of court houses and warehouses. Off the street-facing houses were terraced built courts having four houses on each side with about a five yard walkway between. Large flagstones comprised the walkway from the bottom to the top of the court.



Children outside their cellared home - 1923

If a family were fortunate to live in a street-facing house they had the advantage of having a water tap and toilet - a luxury compared to their immediate court-house neighbours - but most people lived in the cellared courts which, on the average, comprised half of each street, the other half being warehouses used for storing all kinds of goods delivered from the nearby docks.

To describe the court-house areas one must begin with the flag-stoned cellar which was really the key part of the house. Each cellar was boxed in by iron railings having eight steps to walk down from the court level. This uncovered flag-stoned cellar was the place where cooking, eating, washing, living and bathing necessities were carried out. Wooden stairs led up to the other rooms of the house.

In the corner of the cellar stood a opening which led under the court walkway into which coal and waste wood collected from nearby warehouses was stored. It also housed the only water tap. On the walkway facing each house was a round steel grid which was lifted to enable the coal delivery man to drop the hundred-weight or so of coal into this cellar extension.

Cooking was completed on an iron-barred grate fire which burned any fuel available, or in the attached oven. Water for washing was boiled in buckets or washing tins obtained from certain shops when discarded as rubbish. Baths took place in front of the cellar fire, standing in a long tin tub - perhaps with two or three of the younger children bathing together.

A big iron kettle was the norm with an equivalent sized teapot. What was known as an oilcloth table cover - generally much marked by hot teapots or knife cuts - with the inevitable tin of condensed milk decorating the table. Some chairs or wooden trestle seating was available for mealtime or general eating. Should all the family eat together mainly on Sundays, the younger children would be seated on the stairs.

House lighting was provided by paraffin oil lamps which gave quite a good illumination if well maintained, although quite smelly. O'Briens chandlers shop - situated at one corner of Stone Street was the supplier of lamp wicks, pints of paraffin oil, various kinds of candles and bundles of firewood.

When going to bed on a dark evening one would have a candle placed in a tin holder with a cup-type finger clip attached to the grease shield. It was a recognised hazard not to let candle grease fall on any part of clothing, which would bring down the wrath of an older sister whose job it was to erase the stain of the grease, using brown paper pressed by a hot clothes iron.

Gas lighting was installed in the court houses of Upper William Street during the late 20's and it cost 15 shillings for each house to have it linked up, apparently from the street lamps supply, this money was repaid by additions to the rent. It made a vast difference to the comfort and brightness in the cellar also eliminating the smell of the paraffin oil.

On the subject of rent the houses were owned by private landlords whose rent men collected what was due mostly on late Monday afternoons or Tuesdays, thus giving reasonable time from possible payday, or money from pawnshop pledges which were regularly made on a Monday morning. Paying ones rent was essential, for excess rent default could mean a 'moonlight flit' or eviction. Should the rent man be missed for any reason, payment would have to be made personally at a rent office in the city centre situated in Harrington Street.

Compared with modern day habits when home debris may mean having one or two bins or a wheelie bin to store rubbish prior to its collection, it was remarkable in those days of poverty that the rubbish from eight large families would need just one tip-down lidded bin which stood at the end of the court. The answer of course, was that anything burnable was thrown on the fire to provide heat for one reason or other, finally leaving just ash to be thrown away.

Still describing the courts a mention should be made about the communal toilet - known as the closet which was built at the top end. This toilet served the needs of the eight families who averaged about nine people. Night-time natural needs in each house were kept in various containers which had to be emptied at morning time into the communal toilet. Such was the insensitive conditions these people lived in.

Also at the top end of the court was a low wall with high metal railings to separate one cluster of courts from another, such as Upper William Street from the adjoining Princess Walk, or

Princess Walk from Whitley Street. There was a complete area of 12 courts from Whitley Street, Princess Walk and Upper William Street containing a total of 96 houses with a population of approximately 700 to 800 people.

Families in these tight living areas of courts and streets were normally close friends although there were at times, rows and disagreements. It kept families in close contact where they would visit, talk, play, borrow, share joys and troubles, and help if possible. Very poor or deprived families were often helped with the necessities of life. There were households - perhaps with the father having a permanent job who would always provide a meal to older people or less fortunate families. Older couples whose grown-up families had married and living elsewhere would allow children from nearby large families to sleep in the now empty bedrooms.

Such was the overcrowding in certain families and laws forbidding it, that the authorities employed people to suddenly appear during the early hours of the night to check if families had excess people sleeping in any houses. These officials were known as the 'Nightmen' who could cause families to be split up and were feared.

When these people were in an area, word would be spread in that neighbourhood and children moved from house to house until such officials had moved on.

The worry about each family was thrown mainly on to the shoulders of the mother, although the daughters if old enough eased her burden in everyday matters, such as cleaning, washing and preparing meals, leaving mother with the

permanent worry of juggling with whatever money was available to obtain the families never ending needs.

Many were the journeys made by most mothers as they trudged up to the cheaper shopping areas such as Great Homer Street, Paddy's Market or the Cazenue Street Market looking for bargains.

A typical breakfast would be porridge or big butter beans with a thick end crust or slices of bread from what was then known as a 2lb loaf (the miracle of sliced bread was yet to come). Tinned condensed milk was mainly used in the making of tea. Meals would vary according to the money available, but stews or scouse or sometimes rabbit were the mainstay at most times.

Friday was always different because of the church ruling about abstaining from eating meat. Fish meals were the answer to that problem, potato fish cakes were popular and cheap to make.

Sunday morning was also a bit special when salt fish was the standard breakfast, not forgetting to soak it overnight to soften and release the excessive salt before cooking. Extra effort for a Sunday special dinner was made, any surplus would supplement a Monday warm-up meal.

Here and there in the courts small cellar shops appeared, selling what could be termed the basic needs of the average family, such as bread, packets of tea, cocoa, loose sugar, condensed milk etc, they were the equivalent of what would be called the modern corner shop.

One remembers how convenient these little cellar shops were to a child. A halfpenny or penny would purchase enough sweets or toffee, mostly served in a cone shaped paper bag to satisfy the immediate needs of yourself and friends. Mrs McCrystal who had such a shop situated in the top court of Upper William Street ran a Xmas Club in which a child would pay small installments until one shilling was fully paid and marked up on a card.

Christmas could not arrive quickly enough for those children when a boxed variety of goodies would be triumphantly accepted from Mrs McCrystal and carried home to be opened on the big-day if not sooner.

The main food shops of course were situated along Great Howard Street serving the meat, groceries, bread and other needs of a family. We even had in later years the luxury of a German pork butcher named Ludwig Vogel, who sold various delicious cooked meats, also next door a one-man Chinese laundry named Gaw Tung.

As befitting the times, there was the inevitable pawnshop (Sam Barnard and his able assistant Percy Sexton) who we can suppose would know members of practically every family in the parish. They were in fact firm but kindly men, who no doubt had the gift of diplomacy when dealing with regular customers who were out to borrow the most money they could on their pledges. It was a regular battle of wits by some desperate people who would try other pawnshops, some in the Scotland Road area, where a pledge would perhaps get a further three or sixpence more than was offered at 'Sams'. Sam

Barnard died in 1934 but the business was carried on by his former assistant Percy Sexton whose new shop was close to Cotton Street.

Towards the end of the 1920's Mr Malones fish and chip shop which was between Upper William Street and Princess Walk was in business. A few weeks of hoarded old newspapers taken to Malones 'chippy' would be given a portion of chips in exchange - he always asked the same question 'Are they clean?'

Bob Smethurst had his barbers shop next to Malones chippy and always seemed to be busy. It had the sawdust covered floor as was usual at that time with spittoons placed in strategic positions here and there. This shop will be specially remembered for having a former terrier pet dog stuffed and sitting on a shelf high up in a corner.

Further along, at the corner of Princess Walk was a well run cocoa-rooms owned by the Mitchells. Kept extremely busy especially at dinner times by warehousemen, carters and numerous workers who went there six days a week.

As a treat when occasionally sent for a two-penny bowl of pea soup one would stand at the shop counter and be fascinated watching the various men seated at the white-scrubbed tables eating the hot-pot or scouse served in tin bowls or on plates which had arrived via the dumb-waiter and handed out by Mrs Mitchell. Some men having brought their own sandwiches would ask for a 'large tea' served in a huge mug, then after eating would then enjoy smoking and chatting, no doubt about the events of the morning or trying to pick a future winner at the horse racing. Their three or sixpence bet would be furtively

handed to a bookies runner stationed nearby in a court.

On the opposite corner of Princess Walk was Caseys vegetable shop available for all farm and dairy requirements. Goods were weighed on big scales using the 7, 14 or 28lb weights. Eggs if bought in a dozen probably costing sixpence, would sometimes be given an extra egg, or a cracked one added. This shop would always have lines of unskinned rabbits hooked on to metal bars outside.

Fresh milk could only be bought at Hartleys sweet shop which was close to Whitley Street or from Mr. Beardswood a street milk man who used his pint measure dipped into a large churn. He also sold fresh eggs as he journeyed from street to street pushing a cart and shouting 'Milko, Milko'.

Along our main street there were grocers with the names of Traynors (facing Dublin/Saltney streets), Kings near Upper William Street. Sweets shops - Clydes, Morans, Spencers, Bannons, Smiths, Cains; bread/cake shops were Taylors (Clegg Street) and Lunts (Carlton Street) this shop was joked about by the children who sang 'Lunts bread is as hard as lead'.

On the corner of Regent Street was a coal yard owned by Mr. Jim Bannon he was related to Lucy Maguire who had a sweet shop near the corner of Little Howard Street, next to Potts & Jones hardware shop.

There was also a constant stream of hawkers who would be selling fresh fish and every kind of fruit and vegetables. A very well known personality was Dolly Hickey who came from Saltney Street, she was an extremely hard working woman who

also had a large family. Years later her descendants who no doubt had advanced in the world now owned a pub in Scotland Road, it was almost opposite St. Anthony's church and was named 'Dolly Hickeys'.

As was normal throughout Liverpool the public house was probably the most popular and cheapest place for a worker to relax, in fact they would be almost the only places in early years where one could sit or stand talking to acquaintances. Later church halls, or billiard rooms such as YMCA's came into use for dancing or parish meetings.

In many homes the public house was probably the main bone of discontent with regard to the amount of hard earned money spent by the husband on drink; forgetting the mother of the family waiting for him to arrive home with his depleted wages so necessary to purchase the needs of the family.

It speaks for itself just how popular public houses were; with few exceptions every street had a pub on the corners facing Great Howard Street. The dock-side streets especially along the Waterloo and Regent roads had pubs almost every hundred yards, named after past battles, famous ships or heroes.

The inevitable was always present i.e. the funeral director. Mr. Friery took care of that business in the parish. It was a formality for him to arrive wearing a top hat and sitting on the front open seat of the hearse. In the very early days two horses would pull the hearse from church, its destination being the Catholic cemetery at Ford. Mr. Friery was also remembered for organising Sunday church collections and St. Vincent de Paul business.

In later years after the Augustinians had moved to new areas, his son Myles Friery was a prominent helper in the new parish of St. Aloysius in Huyton. The point of interest being that he still owned his fathers top hat. That hat was often the target at many field-day events as people bought wooden balls and tried their best to knock it off a wearers head as he paraded up and down behind a fence with the hat sticking above. 'Brains Kelly' another well-known personality from our parish was often the wearer of Mr. Friery's hat at these events.

It was traditional when a parishioner died to have a wake when the deceased would be kept at home generally for three days. At these wakes a lot of cheerful reminiscences about the deceased would be made, such as any carefree mannerisms if their personality was such, or whatever attitudes to life and how it affected their family or friends; in the main any faults would be overlooked being remembered with dignity and fondness.

Friends of the family would be continually coming and going, with neighbours helping with any organising required for the funeral. Generally financial help would be made by a street collection which in some cases would be needed by many families.

Should the deceased be a member of the CYMS or SVP it was normal for members of those organisations to collect and carry the coffin containing its former member in procession from his home, along to the church on the evening prior to the funeral.

It was a significant fact that this close area of the city did not have a doctor. One asks why? Times were obviously different from many years later with the advent of the Welfare State. True if anyone, adult or particularly a child was sick it would then be

a walking or carrying journey to the nearest doctors who were Dr. Brown (Athol Street) or Dr. Melrose who was in St., Paul's Square).

Doctors in those days were paid immediately for their services, perhaps one shilling or a little more. They were a money-wise mixed breed according to individual standards, some at times giving their services free perhaps realising the financial circumstances of a patient. A cheap alternative was the four-penny dispensary situated in the Vauxhall area.

When a birth was due it was principally in the hands and guidance of the midwife who would hastily be called to the home requiring her services. There she would always have the assistance of willing neighbours who themselves in the past would have experienced the same help. Many a child was born and cared for in emergencies by neighbours without the immediate help of a doctor or midwife.

New babies we always arriving perhaps causing a headache for the parents when choosing a name at the christening - there already being a Paddy, Mary, Michael, Maggie, Tommy, Johnny and so on, still it was another child to love and care for.

On the subject of medicine it was not until the early 30's that a chemists shop (Greens) was opened, situated between the Smethurst barbers and Malone's chip shop. There were a few of what were known as 'herbalist' shops selling supposedly cough cures, rubbing bottles, snuff and health drinks some tasting of aniseed, bottles of cod-liver oil detested by most children were also on sale.

One of these shops was Spencers which was at the top of Oil Street and held a great attraction for children. The procedure was thus; a child accompanied by friends would purchase a drink perhaps sarsaparilla which was a supposedly medicinal drink. All the children would then flock around what was known as the 'electric shock machine'. Mounted on a wall it had two brass knobs, which were held left and right by different children who were holding hands with the others in the group. After a penny was inserted an electric current would flow along the line of children who would squirm and squeal until the flow ceased. The fewer the children the stronger the electric tingles, making it difficult to let go of the knobs until the timing of the flow ceased. It was great fun!

It is always a true saying that someone is always worse off than oneself, for occasionally we had beggars and buskers doing their best to extract a few coppers from people by their antics and attempts to sing in and around the courts and streets, or by standing in half opened doors of pubs hoping for a handout. Perhaps a barrel-organ would try its luck with its more melodious music of the times.

As mentioned early in the introduction the parish was similar to a village and over the years slowly becoming self-contained, building the facilities for a better way of life.

SCHOOL DAYS

The crown jewel of our parish was the school. Built in 1896-97 and opened by Bishop Whiteside, it then taught 916 children such was the child population at that time. Extending from Stone Street to Upper William Street it comprised of three sections; infants on the ground floor, girls on next floor, with the boys situated on the top floor who used the buildings flat roof as their playground.

A child would start its school days when five years old, entering the gates in Upper William Street, some no doubt shedding a few tears when handed over by their mother to the commanding presence of the Sister who in this age would be dressed in long dark robes and having the large black and white coiffure head dress.

School would start at nine o'clock in the morning, later playing in the school yard shared and later used by the older girls. Half day break came at 12:00 noon until 1:30 p.m. Children would all go home during this period as the streets of the parish were within a few minutes walk from the school to their homes.

Their stay in the infants would normally last until they were seven years old and then up the many steps into what was called the 'big boys' or 'big girls' who occupied separate floors.

The girls' Headmistress was Sister Cecilia who was assisted by six teachers who all had their own special personalities such as the one and only Miss Cunningham who lived in Regent Street,

Miss Conboy and others who in later years were fondly remembered by former pupils.

Boys who were situated on the top floor of the school would enter in Stone Street then run up about 40-50 stone steps and into each classroom before nine o'clock. Punctuality was stressed by Headmaster Mr. Henry Bassett. At nine o'clock the classroom doors would be closed whilst morning prayers were said, thus latecomers would have to wait on the steps leading to the classrooms preparing themselves with hushed whispers to face the wrath of Mr. Bassett. One stroke of the cane was normal punishment but sometimes more, should he remember you having been late before.

Our headmaster insisted that his pupils were taught to speak correctly. Children would have to open their mouths wide, thus prevented from speaking through closed teeth. He would emphasise not to drop the letter (h) in conversation, e.g. (Ello) for Hello, or (Ouse) for House; certainly not to use (h) unnecessarily e.g. (Hegg) for Egg, or (Hoven) for Oven. This rather lazy pronunciation of commonplace words was often used wrongly, but never in the presence of the headmaster.

There were probably more than 40 boys in each class of different ages, until leaving school at the age of fourteen. The main emphasis on the three R's was always adhered to. During English lessons teacher would quote a paragraph slowly and the pupil would write it down according to his ability. Odd words of the reading would be checked for spelling errors and counted. More than a pre-determined number would be punished with the boy standing on his seat and caned for every mistake.

Some readers could say this method of teaching would be brutal and no doubt it was. It went a long way to show most pupils that efforts to concentrate made life more comfortable.

Of course, school life at St. Augustine was not all tears and fear. Happy times such as Christmas parties (not forgetting to bring your own large tea mug) and enjoying the cakes and biscuits kindly supplied by Fairries or Tate & Lyles sugar companies, later by Wrights biscuit factory.

Fridays were generally more relaxed than usual perhaps sometimes having singing lessons in the morning. Songs such as 'The Minstrel Boy', 'The Harp that once through Tara's Hall' 'You take the High Road'. At times Mr. Bassett would linger during the singing possibly searching out potential choir boys or eliminating those that sang 'down in their boots'. Occasionally the faint strains from the girls school would be heard as they were singing such songs as 'In Dublin's Fair City'.

Possibly because teachers were preparing work for the following week, the Friday afternoon was for general reading, enjoying the adventure books such as Treasure Island, Robinson Crusoe or perhaps John Brown's school days. How many times did we read the two-penny red covered Irish Messenger stories?

Weather permitting, Mr. Bassett would gather all the older classes on the playground roof and give an enlightening talk about world happenings or general topics. His most emphatic advice was not to miss Sunday Mass and to attend Sunday school which took place at 3 o'clock, always saying that any weekend misconduct or troubles reported to him on Monday would be dealt with in the strictest manner.

Should bad weather prevent the playground talk being given by Mr. Bassett, discussions or a debate would take place, it would be something interesting and topical of the time. One remembers the debate between Mickey Kinsella of Princess Walk and Tommy Doherty of Saltney Street discussing whether we should be better using the newer method of travelling by bus or stay with the tramcar. It speaks volumes for such training when Mickey Kinsella became in later years the Secretary of the Liverpool Bookbinders Union.

There were others referred to later, making notable efforts for the improvement of Merseyside people, who originated from a humble upbringing in the parish of St.. Augustine; one in particular was Paul Orr a City Councillor for many years who reached the high office of Lord Mayor of Liverpool in 1977.

A quote from *Gray's Elegy*:

*Full many a gem of the purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear
There's many a flower born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness in the desert air*

Many children if given better opportunities in earlier life had the ability to advance into numerous professions for the betterment of all. Lack of money in many instances prevented gifted children from advancement. Clothes and books would have meant extra expense which some parents could or would not meet especially on girls, their parents wrongly believing that their further education would be wasted.

In the last year at school, boys would be given an insight to their possible working life by being marched to handicraft classes held at a special school in Blackstock Street, where for one half day they were taught the rudiments of wood or metal work. This no doubt, was a step in the right direction should opportunities open for employment or apprenticeship in wood relevant trades.

Most of the boys found such instruction a pleasant change away from the usual lessons and efforts were encouraged to produce something useful to take home at the end of the term. Cricket bats and wickets - handy for playing later in the street, sewing boxes to please mothers, stools for the baby to sit on, book ends. At the end of such training the boys would be allowed to take home the result of their work, perhaps proudly presenting their efforts to the recipient.

Girls also in their last year would receive cookery, bookbinding and sewing machine lessons held in the church hall.



The now empty Boys School - 1990



School foundation stone outside Boys School in Stone Street - 1990

SAINT AUGUSTINES SCHOOL DAYS

For days gone by, I heave a sigh
As memories crowd my brain
I close my eyes and there it lies
St.. Augustine's once again

Its five-to-nine now get to school
You'd better not be late
For our Headmaster was no fool
He'd catch you at the gate

From head to toe and toe to head
He'd look you through and through
And if your hands and face were black
Then it was 'God help you'

Up the stairs you raced like mad
Hoping they'd not said prayers
But when you opened the classroom door
You were greeted with hostile stares

The teacher would ask why you were late
Believe me you had to be quick
And if your excuse was a little too glib
He'd make you think twice with the stick

You'd start slogging through with your
Lessons and feel he was watching just 'You'
And when the bell sounded for playtime
You were glad THAT session was through

Up on the roof you would scamper
That was the time you liked most
For under your jersey wrapped up in paper
Was a lovely great piece of toast

Your mates would crowd around you
Pal give us a bit', they would say
So you shared it with all your buddies
And when it was gone you would play

Once more into the classes you would enter
All noise would cease in a flash
For one thing about the 'Old Schooldays'
It just didn't pay to be rash

Now don't get to thinking our Teachers
Were cruel and heartless or mean
To me they were men you respected
No matter how hard they had been

It was them who made MEN out of Monkeys
And taught you to laugh when you lose
They gave you a code you could live by
'NEVER get too big for your shoes'

Teachers like Hurley and Baker
Dunleavy and Moran too
Were led by one Henry J. Bassett
Yes - these were the Teachers I knew

These were the men who so quietly
Worked for the good of us all
With things like a 'Goodfellow's Parcel'
And help from St.. Vincent de Paul

So now with my reverie ending
I offer my thanks and my praise
And proudly I'll drink to the memory
Of them and my good old school days

CHARLIE CULL

A TEACHERS KINDNESS

Mr. Dunleavy was noticed for his thoughtfulness to a pupil in his class. This boy being the youngest in his family was sent on many messages. On this occasion after school he was told to take a pledge to Sam Barnard's pawnshop. When leaving the shop he bumped heavily into Mr. Dunleavy who was walking on his way to the nearby tram stop. The lad apologised but was very embarrassed to have been seen leaving the pawnbrokers by his teacher.

Weeks later this teacher was giving a lesson on the budget, making a point about money transactions and mentioned that everybody rich and poor were a times short of immediate money, such as the city businessman who would need cash and pledge his watch to pay for his and friends lunch or drinks. The boy saw this explanation as Mr. Dunleavy's way of saying that there was no shame in visiting a pawnbroker.

Four o'clock saw the school emptying and children making their way home, soon to be out playing in the cobbled streets if the weather was dry. The steam wagons and horsedrawn carts would be shortly passing on the way back to a garage or stable. Children took pleasure watching these powerful horses, now released from the shafts or chains of their labour's as they were led along Love Lane to Lathom stables which were at the top of Stone Street.

Horses were exciting to be near. If asked the carter would tell a child the horses name, some having the same name as the child, such as Joey or Rosie the news delighting the enquirer. During working hours these powerful animals laboured

extremely hard normally in twos, harnessed together. Pulling open cart loads of cotton bales, brown sugar, animal foodstuffs, dried fruit to and from the docks to high warehouses occupying half of the streets that the children lived in.

Should an extra heavy load on a horse-drawn cart cause pulling difficulties another horse would be chain linked to the leading animal. It was then that children would stand well away as the three horses would strain and dig their shoes into the cobbled niches of the street with sparks jumping out as their shoes struck the cobbles.

Steep inclines as were in Burlington Street was always difficult for the horses and according to the load-weight four horses would sometimes be necessary. Removing part of the load was often the only solution.

Whilst struggling to pull such loads a horse may lose its footing and would either have the back legs outstretched or end up on its front knees as it fell. A lone driver would require help in such difficulties which would be given by fellow carters familiar with these situations. Chains would be uncoupled and the cart backed away from the fallen horse. Remembering that cart horses were very big and heavy, it required strong help to regain its footing while being spread-eagled on the cobbles. With many men lifting or pulling at a signal, the horse would then start to scramble onto its legs with a shower of sparks from its hooves. There would be a hasty exit by helpers not wishing to be kicked, and a big cheer would resound from the onlooking children as the exciting scene ended.

During the carters break times the horse would rest and be fed with its head deep into a bag of provinder feed. Now and then it would give a loud snort and shake the bag of feed no doubt to eat the contents more easily. Little tit-bits would be hesitatingly offered by the occasional fearless boy. The horse now finished eating would be looking around for the carter to bring a bucket of water. They were our friends and very much admired by children, some of whom had ambitions to grow up and become a carter.

The streets were the play areas in which the children would enjoy their young lives. Many drainpipes were used over the years as the girls played throwing cherrywobs up a rainwater spout. Shop, a game played with pieces of broken crockery, valued cheap or dear according to any spots of gold paint or colour. Rounders, skipping ropes, top and whip, hopscotch and swinging from the arms of the gas lamp-posts.

Lamp-post swinging by the girls or street football by boys was forbidden by the police, so hasty exits from the street with a mad dash into the courts and cellars was necessary to prevent a later journey to Dale Street Police Court where a fine for so-called dangerous conduct would have to be paid.

This hasty procedure was also necessary when the older men would play pitch-and-toss or cards in various places like court ends or on the steps of a street-facing house. Younger boys would be paid to watch and shout a warning should a group of policemen be seen, as this meant a police raid was imminent. The police would charge into the street from both ends hoping to catch the wrong-doers before they melted into the cellars of the courts. Many families would be startled to suddenly have a gambler or two quickly enter their cellar and sit nonchalantly at

their tables as if he had been there all day. Apparently the police had no legal right to enter a house without permission which was hardly likely to be given.

Street betting was illegal, thus causing opportunities for local bookies to thrive and prosper on the natural instinct of the average person to sometimes gamble. All methods to beat the bookies by a variety of bets, and the bookies outwitting the police was a constant practice. Bets would be passed from street to street via some court railings to reach the bookie, one of whom lived in Whitley Street and nicknamed 'Slack Meskell'.

Again lookouts would be paid to warn the bookie should police be approaching his patch. Detectives would try various ploys to catch the bookies some disguised as coalmen, carters, sewer or street gas lamp inspectors. There would be dismay amongst the people who had placed a bet with a bookie who was arrested, more so if their bet was a winner, because all bets were confiscated.



'Having a sing-song whilst sitting on a warehouse loading bay - 1931'

Regular horse-betting gamblers would often use on a betting slip the same non-de-plume for identification. Later in the evening a child would be sent to collect any money won by the gambler and asking for the money by saying for instance 'Can I have "Paddy Wacks" money'. No doubt a book could be written about betting slip non-de-plumes such as 'Tom Mix', 'Tarzan', childrens and even saints names were used.

The police had their orders and duty to enforce. One that caused resentment with grown men, who if no work was available may linger for a smoke or chat on street corners; they would be ordered to move on and not assemble in groups. It seems very sad that adults suffered this humiliation when in a few future years they would in many cases be defending their right to be free, some to lose their lives during the Second World War.

Overall it is probable that the schoolboys had more liberty or freedom to enjoy themselves than the girls who were likely to be tied to household chores or caring for younger members of the family.

In most cases not being wealthy enough to own a bicycle one could be hired from a house in Burlington Street at a penny per hour. These bicycles were termed as 'Rips', not having any mudguards, mostly with buckled wheels and without brakes the only way to stop was to jam a foot between the front frame and tyre. It was a great thrill to sweep down Burlington Street and into Love Lane praying that a future visit to the Northern Hospital would not be necessary.

Boys could obtain extra pocket money such as taking empty jam jars to a grocer who gave a penny for so many, rags could be collected and taken to a rag warehouse which was close to the Gaiety picture house in Scotland Road, chopping and selling firewood or helping a hawker to pull or push a handcart. Watching and warning gamblers or a bookie should police be nearby was sometimes well rewarded, these little extras would help to pay for the pictures or sweets.

In the 20's and 30's one of the highlights of our young lives was going to the Burlington Cinema especially the Saturday penny matinee. Serials were thrilling, continuing from week to week and always ending with the hero winning. The Christmas matinee was special when the child would be given an orange, apple and a bar of toffee when entering the cinema. Happy days!

Next door was the open-air free baths. Always cold fresh water, one had to be a 'thick skinned' lad to enjoy a quick, in and out swim. Certain days were for boys only, so bathing costumes - not that many boys had them - were never worn. Now and then, clothes left without a minder would be stolen, leaving the unlucky lad facing a dilemma. Should he and his mates hang around hoping another boys clothes were unattended and snatch a pair of trousers and gansey, or would someone go home and tell his mother

On this occasion the boys mother eventually arrived, she chastised the lad who was ten years old, gathered him up in her big shawl and carried him down over the Bridge to their home in Regent Street. It was hardly likely that he ever went again to 'Burly Baths' after the acute embarrassment he had suffered. A more pleasant dip or swim could be had under Chisenhale

Street bridge where warm water from Tate & Lyle's sugar factory seeped into the Leeds and Liverpool canal.

Empty wooden boxes were in demand when they would be made into handcarts or steering carts should any old perambulator wheels be obtained. Streets having the slightest incline would become a temporary race-track and used as such until the box vehicle splintered or a wheel fell off.

Hoops were any old spokeless bicycle wheels or barrel bands pushed forward by a bent piece of metal pressed downwards onto the rim of the wheel. Many hours of pleasure were enjoyed whilst having races using these crude but simple toys, the neatest to be steered or jump over obstacles by a skilfull driver was considered the winner of the best hoop.

What could be termed a park in this area in which we lived was call the Lockfields, although there was not a blade of grass to be seen. It was an area starting at the furthestmost north point of Love Lane at the top of Sherwood Street extending over to the rubbish incinerator situation on the other side of the canal and close to the canal locks leading into the Stanley Dock basin.

This so-called field had over the years been covered by the small coke clinker ash from the nearby incinerator making it a dirty place to play on. A tumble whilst playing football could turn out nasty should dirt get into a cut. It was reputed in the past to have been the scene of many bare-knuckled fighting contests.

Many interesting minutes could be spent watching horses being shod by the shoe-smith in the farriers shop which was situated halfway up Spranger Street. One used to look with wonder at the huge number of horses shoes of various sizes which hung from the whitewashed walls. To witness the smithy lifting the horses leg and place a red hot iron shoe against the foot, with the smoke and hot glue-like scorching odour following, then fastening the shoe onto the foot by hammering in lengthy nails. These shoes were intended to last whilst the horse would be hard worked pulling the heavy loads during its working life.

There is an interesting story about a horse called Henry's Choice that broke its neck whilst running in the Grand National. This horse was treated and cured by a Veterinary doctor who had stables in Vulcan Street next to the dockers Clearing House.

The world opened up for the adventurous with the advent of the Penny transfer tickets when children could have four tram journeys in one day. Small gangs would travel to various parks, laden with sandwiches and lemonade-powdered water, with possibly a jam jar to carry any captured tiny fish home as a trophy after a good days fun.

Lee Jones, a charitable organisation from over the bridge in Limekiln Lane, were also very kind at times. They invited some of the children to parties or days out at New Brighton. If going to New Brighton the children would arrive at the League of Welldoers hall and after being presented with a paper bag of cakes would walk along Scotland Road in a crocodile-like line, into Dale Street passing the Town Hall, onto the Landing Stage then aboard the ferry, destination New Brighton where one could play until late afternoon returning home happy but tired.

Working opportunities were improving slowly over the years and children were enjoying the benefits. Early summer school picnics had started with an annual day away from school commencing with a bone shaking journey on the good old No. 17 tram to the Pierhead then boarding the ferry to New Brighton or Eastham.

Weeks before the big day, children would be saving up their coppers with a determination to spend madly and enjoy the swings and roundabouts, not forgetting to bring home a present for mother or aunts who would have contributed to their spending money.

Girls would have been busy sewing and making little money bags secured by a piece of string and generally worn around the neck to prevent losing their precious picnic money.

It was always a touching and often a wet eyed scene to see mothers standing along Great Howard Street eagerly awaiting the loaded trams to turn at the church corner of Chadwick Street, rattle further on then unload the cheering, singing, noisy but precious cargoes of happy children.

Time passed with school days ending. A 14-year old boy before closing his classroom door for the last time would have been given his school character, outlining what the headmaster knew were the boys best assets.

The time had now arrived for the boy or girl to face the world and look for a job. Boys without any relatives or friends to help them obtain employment would ask at factories or offices in the city if they had any vacancies. There was a boys employment

office in Sir Thomas Street where one could wait hoping that an employer may contact this office looking for a messenger or handcart boy. Should a job be announced the boys would run to the address given and apply for the job with the potential employer making his decision.

Sometimes such jobs could lead to an apprenticeship in a skilled trade, but unfortunately many boys would be employed until sixteen years old then sacked, being replaced by a new 14-year old.

Girls were in the same situation. An instance occurring in one big shop in the city where girls handling many hundreds of pounds each day at a cash desk were paid four shillings per week in wages, later perhaps if lucky progressing to a shop assistant.

It was an unforgettable experience for a newly employed girl or boy to be handed their first weeks wage in a sealed envelope, although it was probably less than ten shillings. Then the wonderful moment when the youngster proudly handed the unopened envelope to mother, feeling no doubt that they were now grown up.

Many men and youths would spend their evenings at the CYMS club rooms which were situated over the parish hall in Little Howard Street and could have the use of three full-size billiard tables. Interest in this sport grew and eventually a championship team had been developed and was gaining a winning reputation. Some names that come to memory were Sammy Cunningham, Bill Duff, Myles Friery, Joe Finnegan, Pat Fitzsimons, Ted Mulvany and Chris Kelly - who personally received a best player cup. The parish was very proud to

witness this team when they were paraded in our area of St. Augustine, whilst standing on an open horse-drawn cart as it moved along Great Howard Street.

The Carberry family of Princess Walk were prominent in the sport of boxing for many years using the old original cellar school under the church hall as training quarters. Frank Carberry who was guided by his father often fought in the Liverpool Pudsey Street Stadium and later helped the younger boys of our area who were interested in the sport. An outstanding boy in the 30's was Joey Rogan whose career was later hampered by the war.



Saint Augustines 1959-60

On the question of sport it may be opportune to mention Pat Reid a Dublin born man who married and settled in our parish, later he was a formidable worker for his new parish of St. Aloysius in Huyton. His grandson Peter Reid is a well known footballer who has played for Bolton and Everton, he was also an English International. At the moment of writing Peter is the manager of the successful Sunderland Football Club.

RELIGIOUS TRAINING

There was always a positive bearing by the church in our school. When moving out of the infants each child would be expected to obtain the penny or two-penny catechism; the basis of their religious training. It is doubtful that any child would forget the first question and answer of the catechism -

Q. *Who Made You?*

A. *God made me.*

Q. *Why did God make you?*

A. *God made me to know him, love him and serve him in this world and be happy with him forever in the next.*

Mornings would start with prayers, normally learning the ten commandments parrot fashion in stages, also the prayers and lessons of the catechism leading up to first confession and holy communion, this session lasting about 30 minutes. There was also prayers before and after dinner break and finally before leaving school at four o'clock.

After making their first confession the children were committed to fortnightly visits to confession, girls then boys on alternate Thursdays. The childrens Sunday Mass was at ten o'clock with some teachers always in attendance, followed by Sunday school at three o'clock - questions would be asked on the following Monday if any pupil had missed Sunday Mass.

Adults were kept close to their faith being visited by priests in their homes whilst making house collections and when there they would ask if the occupants were attending to their duties. The parishioners treated the clergy with great respect; if passing a priest or the church, men would doff their caps the most devout blessing themselves.

It was the custom for the women or girls to wear some form of head-dress if in church, also to bless themselves should they be passing the church.

In these times the Mass was said in Latin, with the priest facing the altar and a child or even the adult had a feeling of mystery as the service progressed. The last Mass on Sunday morning was at eleven o'clock with the choir in attendance under the control of Mr. Bassett.

To live up to the rules of the church, self discipline was very necessary. If going to Holy Communion it was necessary to fast from midnight; one had to abstain from eating meat on Friday and live up to the teaching of the ten commandments. Going to daily Mass and Benediction was encouraged, the Stations of the Cross and self denial during Lent was quite a trial, this was the time when people made a definite commitment to deny themselves a pleasure such as sweets or to be teetotal for that period.

All these trials were forgotten when Christmas Day arrived. Families, no matter how poor or deprived would try and make the day special for the children. Stockings would be hung at the end of the bed to be inspected eagerly on awakening, perhaps to find an apple, orange, mitts, scarf, mouth-organ, electric torch,

rag doll, sweet shop, many presents probably knitted or sewn together by the mothers during the previous weeks.

Midnight Mass was very beautiful, the church being specially brightened and warm with people very attentive, the choir at its best singing the Mass and Christmas carols. The lovely carol 'O come all ye faithful' when sung in Latin, *Adeste Fideles*.

Some of the choir boys whilst making their way along to this Mass would have called in at Malones for a two-penny bag of chips to be eaten before arriving at the church.

Every four years would bring the arrival of the Missioners. The church would be bulging as the people attended the mission services. Women only would attend one week, and men the following week. Parishioners would be reminded in no uncertain terms where duties to their faith lay and the rewards in heaven, as against a terrible fate in hell. It is more than likely that the pubs had a very thin time during the weeks that the Missioners were visiting the parish. Drink was very prominent in sermons, with all of the problems it caused, so for a while men would take the pledge at least until the Missioners left.

As part of the parish religious history mention should be given to those who joined the religious life - many unnamed - but prominent were the girls and boys such as Father Barry from Sherwood Street and Sister Ann Burns from Upper William Street.

Marriages in church were not celebrated during the periods of Lent or Advent making after Easter or Christmas popular times for getting married. Should the girl getting married live in a court house neighbours would prepare for the big day by donkey-stoning the whole court right out to the kerb. If sufficient money was available the bride would be driven by Mr. Friery to church, otherwise she would walk.

Chairs and tables would be borrowed then squeezed into the cellar for the wedding breakfast as it was called. Later perhaps a piano would be borrowed from a well-off friend or a piano-accordion would appear, thus providing the music for the evening entertainment. After ten o'clock when the pubs closed more guests would arrive ensuring that a lively and noisy night was in store. Enquiring police on their rounds would be invited to have a drink and a bite to keep them happy.

Many people would sing their favourite songs whilst making for home after a few too many drinks, perhaps having been to a party or wedding. Weddings were real party times many of which were held on an Easter Monday or Boxing Day.

Some of the saddest incidents in the latter part of the parish history was the loss of lives by the younger men during the Second World War. Every street had its personal loss, a few streets having three or four families grieving for their sons. We must not forget lives lost with the bombing of Wrights biscuits factory shelter in Regent Street when several women were killed.

One of the wartime shelters used by people during the bombing was under the railway at the top of Whitley Street, a grim and basic experience endured when the threat of bombing existed.

MEMORIES

Memories are awoken when thinking about some personalities who lived in these streets. One such man was Jerry Scanlan who drifted in and out of peoples lives with his harmless banter and a cigarette butt permanently hanging from his lips. This man died penniless but his funeral was organised and paid for by dockers.

Whilst lying in bed on foggy nights one remembers the very lonely sound of the ships sirens on the river wailing out their warning to other vessels to keep clear, also the cheerful whistling and horn blowing as each New Year was welcomed in.

The daytime firing of the One O'Clock Gun from Birkenhead was a regular reminder to children that it was getting near the time to return to school.

In politics we had Paul Orr who was a Liverpool Councillor for many years and in 1977 was honoured by being the City's Lord Mayor, that was quite an achievement for a boy from Princess Walk.

Chris Kelly, born in the area known as the Flags which was a cluster of courts facing the church and whose family moved to Huyton, eventually became Chairman of Huyton Council, the equivalent of Mayor. He was ably assisted by Chris Delaney, a quiet but very likable Councillor in Huyton for many years who also became Chairman of Huyton Council in 1960. He was formerly from the bottom court of Upper William Street and when he retired from council duties carried on working at St. Aloysius branch of the SVP.

NICKNAMES

Some nicknames bring happy thoughts to mind when looking back to childhood:-

"Gobbo" Higgins had that title due to a part he played in school whilst reading a Shakespear play.

"Pee Wee" Murphy was given that name when he was very young - no doubt for obvious reasons. Later this young man lost his life whilst serving in the RAF.

"Spot" Kelly His mother did not approve of his nickname. When his friends would stand near his house calling him out to play and using his nickname, she would angrily invite the kids in, to look under the table for a so-called dog.

"Slack" Meskell was a bookie with a coal associated title, he may in his past have been a coal man.

"Sleepy" Porter actually lived next door to the boys school in Stone Street but unfortunately he was habitually late most mornings, he never objected about the nickname.

"Dinky" Moran was a teacher who was about 5 foot 3 inches in height, hence his nickname.

"Boiler" McGrory when small had red hair and was very tubby, his father worked in the boiler-making trade which is probably why he ended up as *"Boiler"*. To his credit he was another boy who made good, he later became Head Master at St. Michael's boys school.

"Fitzy". Any boys having the prefix Fitz to their surname such as Fitzpatrick, Fitzgerald, Fitzsimons, etc would mostly be called *"Fitzy"*.

Chris Kelly was known as *"Brains Kelly"*. He was a leader in the parish especially in the CYMS billiards team and later in politics as previously mentioned.

As befitting its Irish origins St.. Patrick's Day was treated as a Holy Day with children then having the day off school after attending morning Mass. Later this occasion was changed to only the morning off, again to attend Mass.

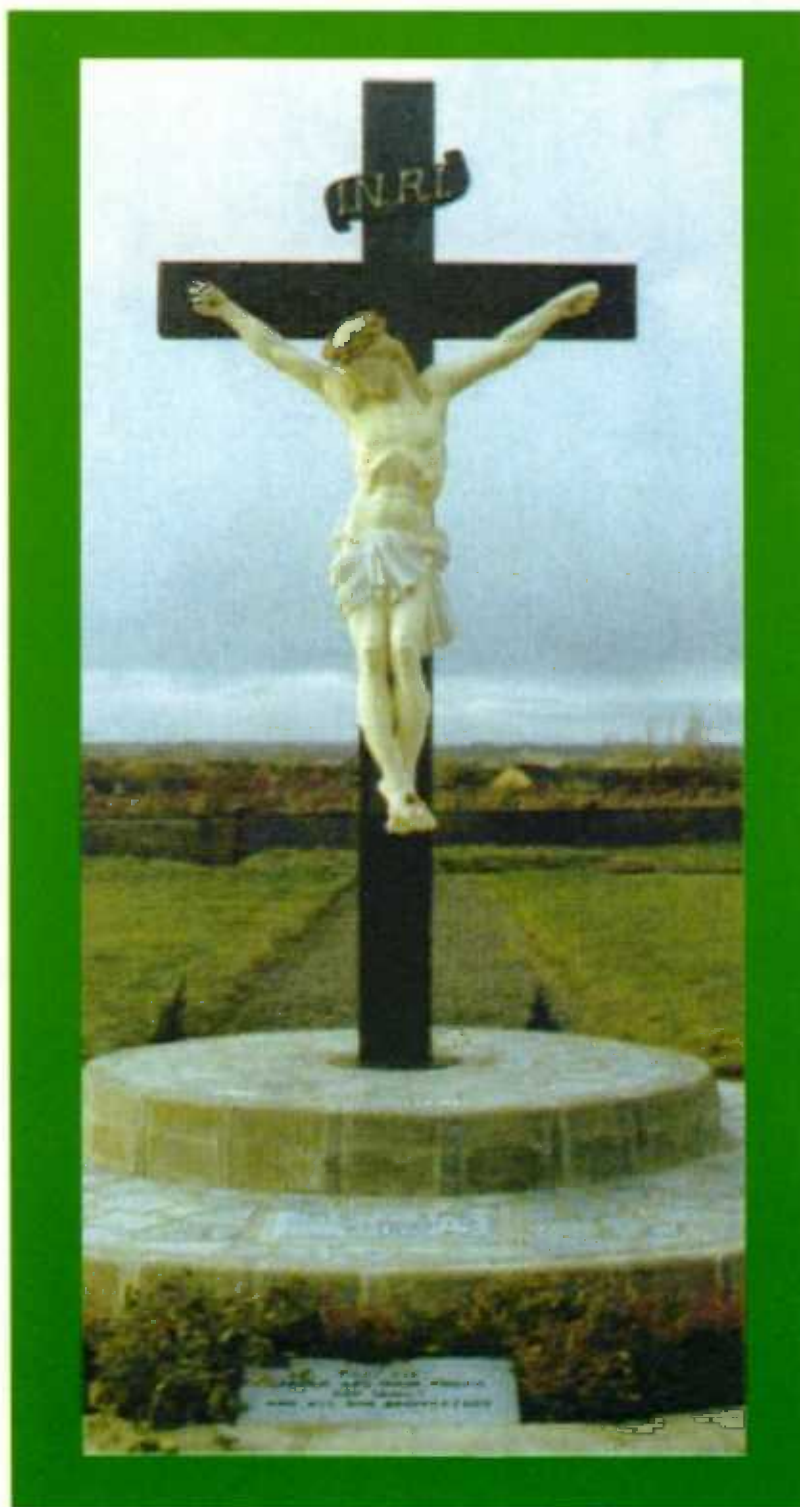
One remembers as a child whilst lying in bed, listening to merry-makers singing their way home after an evenings leisure, their voices echoing from under the railway arches which ran across the top of each street.

Knowing now that our church opened in the year 1849 it sadly held its final Mass in the summer of 1976, in that instance the church was for the last time completely full with its past parishioners paying their respects.

It is a pleasure to learn that the church of St.. Anne in Ormskirk now contains an altar and the tabernacle from St.. Augustines.

The former bustling streets so full of life slowly decayed, the screaming and shouting schoolchildren no more to be heard at play. One can imagine the ghosts of the past drifting around in these historic streets.

Slowly the courts, street houses and shops were demolished and here and there small workshops sprang up, some in the former school, even the partly demolished church was for a time used as a builders warehouse. Finally almost to the day 148 years after the first Mass was celebrated, the church was completely demolished in the Autumn of 1997.



The above picture shows the huge altar crucifix of St. Augustines. When our church was being demolished, two Irish visitors to Liverpool, Jackie and Irene Regan, expressed interest in the crucifix. Arrangements were made to have it shipped to Ireland where it has been erected in the middle of Walsh Island Cemetery, Geashill, County Offaly, where it is much admired by the local residents.

REMEMBER THE GREAT FAMINE

This is a picture of the commemorative plaque placed at the Catholic Chaplaincy in Brownlow Hill, which was previously the site of the Liverpool Workhouse. Many early parishioners of the St. Augustine Church were sheltered and ended their days in those inhospitable buildings.

A similar plaque has been placed on the wall outside the Clarence Dock facing Cotton Street, which states: "Through these dock gates passed most of the 1,300,000 Irish migrants who fled the Great Famine and 'took the ship' to Liverpool in the years 1845 - 52".

