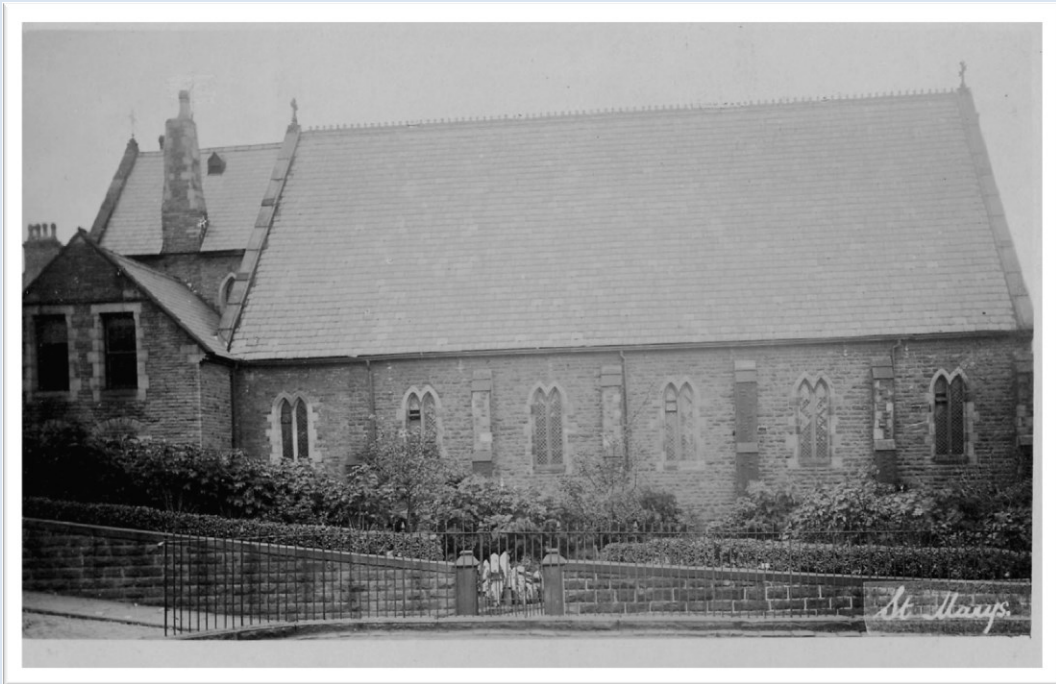


St Mary's Church



Father Henry Mulvany was born in March 1824 at Virginia in the diocese of Kilmore, County, Cavan Ireland. Appointed in 1852 to head the new mission in Bacup he remained here for twenty-eight years 1852-1880. He died in Southsea, Portsmouth at the age of 72 on 29th December 1896. Within a week of arriving in the vicinity he had rented a room over the shop of Mr Pilling Ironmonger on Market Street.



This room was used for services and for the school and led was said to be a large room that could seat up to 300 people and sometimes nearly 400. The first recorded baptisms in 1852 were of twins Elizabeth and Sarah Brett on the 27th September and the following year fifty-seven baptisms, including one adult were recorded. In April 1854 the first recorded marriage took place between Peter Melia and Catherine Davis along with fifty other Baptisms. In 1855 and 1856 the number of baptisms numbered seventy-three and fifty-six each including seven converts.

With the ever-expanding congregation came the need to erect a church and so in 1854 Father Mulvany obtained the land on which to build the St Mary's church. Many of the parishioners having helped in its construction the church opened three years later in 1857. Father Mulvany was very concerned with education and concentrated all of his labours on building a school for the Catholic children.

School had been undertaken in the rooms above Mr Pilling's shop but in 1862 it was relocated to Wesley Place. Ten years later the new St Mary's school was built adjacent to the church and opened in 1903. By 1865 there had been 1,000 baptisms and 241 marriages and it had been estimated that at this time there must have been between 12 and 1300 Catholics in the parish. In 1871 the Catholic portion of the Cemetery was consecrated and the mortuary chapel at Sty Josephs.



Father John Kiely First Parish Priest St Mary's 1913 – 1944.

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