



1964

1989

OUR LADY OF LOURDES, WHEATLEY

The church is situated just off Crown Road, between the High Street and Roman Road.

MASS TIMES: Sundays at 10.00 a.m. Eves of Holydays 7.30 p.m.

The Wheatley area is served by clergy from the parish church of Corpus Christi in Headington, at the junction of Wharton Road and Margaret Road.

MASS TIMES: Sundays 9.00 a.m., 11.00 a.m., 6.30 p.m.
in Headington Holydays 9.15 a.m. and 7.30 p.m.

The presbytery is at 88 Wharton Road, Headington, Tel: Oxford 62433.
See map of parish boundaries and list of clergy on back page.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

In August 1922 the Catholics of Wheatley and the surrounding villages met to celebrate Mass in the Old House, Kiln Lane, where Miss Dale made a room available for them. Since then Wheatley has had a centre for Mass, but it was not until 1964 that a permanent church was created and (appropriately!) sited between Roman Road and High Street.

Mass was celebrated in the Old House until the second World War when the army hospital at Holton was opened. A Catholic Chapel, dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes, in the hospital grounds became a Mass centre until September 1961. Then the hospital was closed and the Chapel with it. For a while Mass was said in a small hall at Farm Close, then when it, too, was closed, Mass was said in the Merry Bells.

On 29 August 1962 a large stone barn, with adjoining cottage and stable, was bought by the parish for approximately £6,000. The barn was originally the Tithe Barn of the old Rectory Farm (once owned by Magdalen College), believed to be over 250 years old and listed for its architectural interest. As one of the parties to the sale wrote: 'Nobody would ever expect such an ideal church for so little'. Car parking space was also included!

However, buying the building was only a first step. Although the barn was basically in good order and had been completely re-roofed between the wars a plan was needed to make the best use of its architectural features. The two great doors at each side, used for winnowing and as entries for loaded waggons were converted to the entrance porch with its splendid hammered iron cross on one side and the Lady Chapel on the other. Lancet windows were designed to blend with the architecture of Rectory House; otherwise simplicity was the keynote of the whole design. Plans were drawn up by Headington architect, Patrick Little.

Parishioners were actively concerned in the restoration and building from the beginning; they cleaned and stripped the great beams which formed the roof, and took part at every stage in the work of restoration and building. The 'team' responsible for final interior decoration included John Garry, Des Coveley, Charlie Good, Roger Hall, John McCarthy and Les Winter, all from Wheatley.

Two other members of the team came from Sandhills in Headington: Charlie Voke who planned the Lady Chapel and worked on the plastering and Fred Brown who constructed the altar and baptismal font. See press photograph in the porch.

Despite the severe winter of 1962-63, building and restoration work was completed in 1964. Oak benches were ordered in August of that year at a cost of £667 plus £15 for delivery, from Preston. The altar stone was put in place on 3 December but the official opening was delayed by the illness of Archbishop Grimshaw. Fr. Joe Davenport was eventually authorised to celebrate the Mass of Dedication on the Feast of the Annunciation 1965. It was noted in the weekly bulletin that 'permission was given for Mass to be offered facing the congregation on that occasion and afterwards once a month'.

The stable, which was originally thought of as a possible social centre was sold in 1986 and has been reconstructed as an office by Cyril Yates, the accountant who first sold the site to the parish.

Ecumenical relationships were fostered by the Good Friday procession of witness started in the early 1960s and supported by Anglican, Catholic and United Reformed (then Congregational) churches. This was followed by ecumenical House Groups in Lent and, in the early 1980s, by shared Stations of the Cross (two weeks in each of the three churches in turn during Lent). The Wheatley Churches Group now includes all denominations in the area.

Denis Egan
1 May 1989

Many people contributed to this historical sketch, especially Mary Hodges who wrote the first draft, Fr. Davenport who used his diaries to check my second draft, and Jim Foster-Turner who did the drawings.

CLERGY APPOINTED TO THE PARISH

PARISH PRIESTS: William Flint 1935-41; Joseph Davenport 1941-65;
George Gallacher 1965; Bernard McKenna 1966-74;
Geoffrey Tucker 1974-77; Laurence Hogarty 1977-80; Denis Egan 1980 -

ASSISTANT PRIESTS: Denis O'Donoghue 1947-51; James Boyle 1952-55;
John Ellis 1956-58; David Duggan 1958-64; John Shanahan 1964-77;
Gerard Hanlon 1967-70; Patrick Downey 1970-74; Eric Morgan 1974-75;
John Travers 1975-76; Peter Ryan 1976-77; Oliver Kemp 1977-79;
Edwin Cownley 1979-86; John Nolan 1986 - ; Charles Smith 1987 - .

HEADINGTON PARISH BOUNDARIES

