

Istituto Storico Salesiano - Roma

STUDI - 8

WILLIAM JOHN  
DICKSON

# The dynamics of growth

## The foundation and development of the Salesians in England

Las - Roma

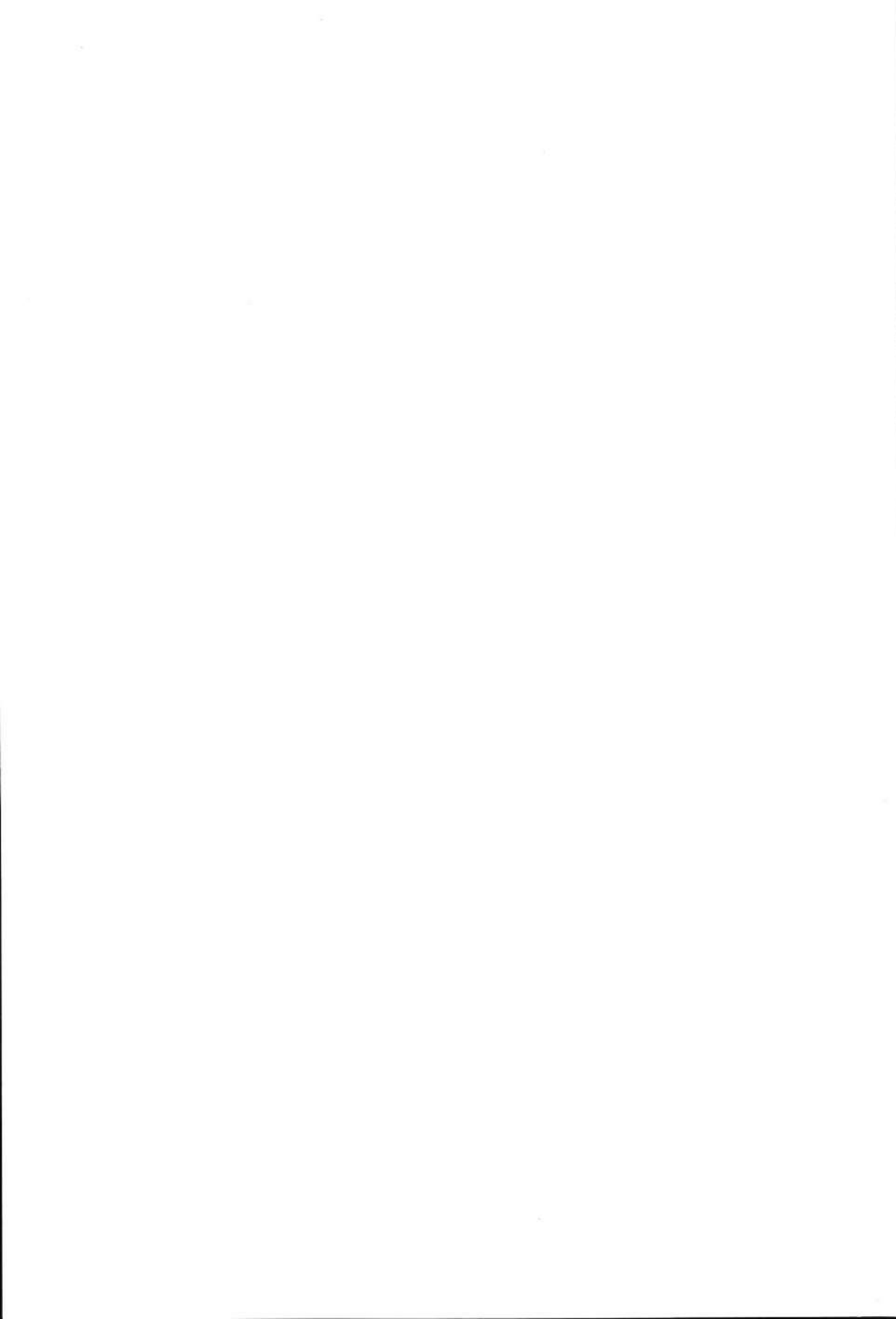




ISTITUTO STORICO SALESIANO - ROMA

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WILLIAM JOHN DICKSON

# THE DYNAMICS OF GROWTH

THE FOUNDATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE SALESIANS IN ENGLAND

LAS - ROMA

A thesis submitted to the Department of Theology in the University of Durham for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, during the centenary of Don Bosco's death, 1988, and dedicated to the memory of all those who helped to life Salesian work for young people in these islands.

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Piazza dell'Ateneo Salesiano, 1 - 00139 Roma

ISBN 88-213-0214-8

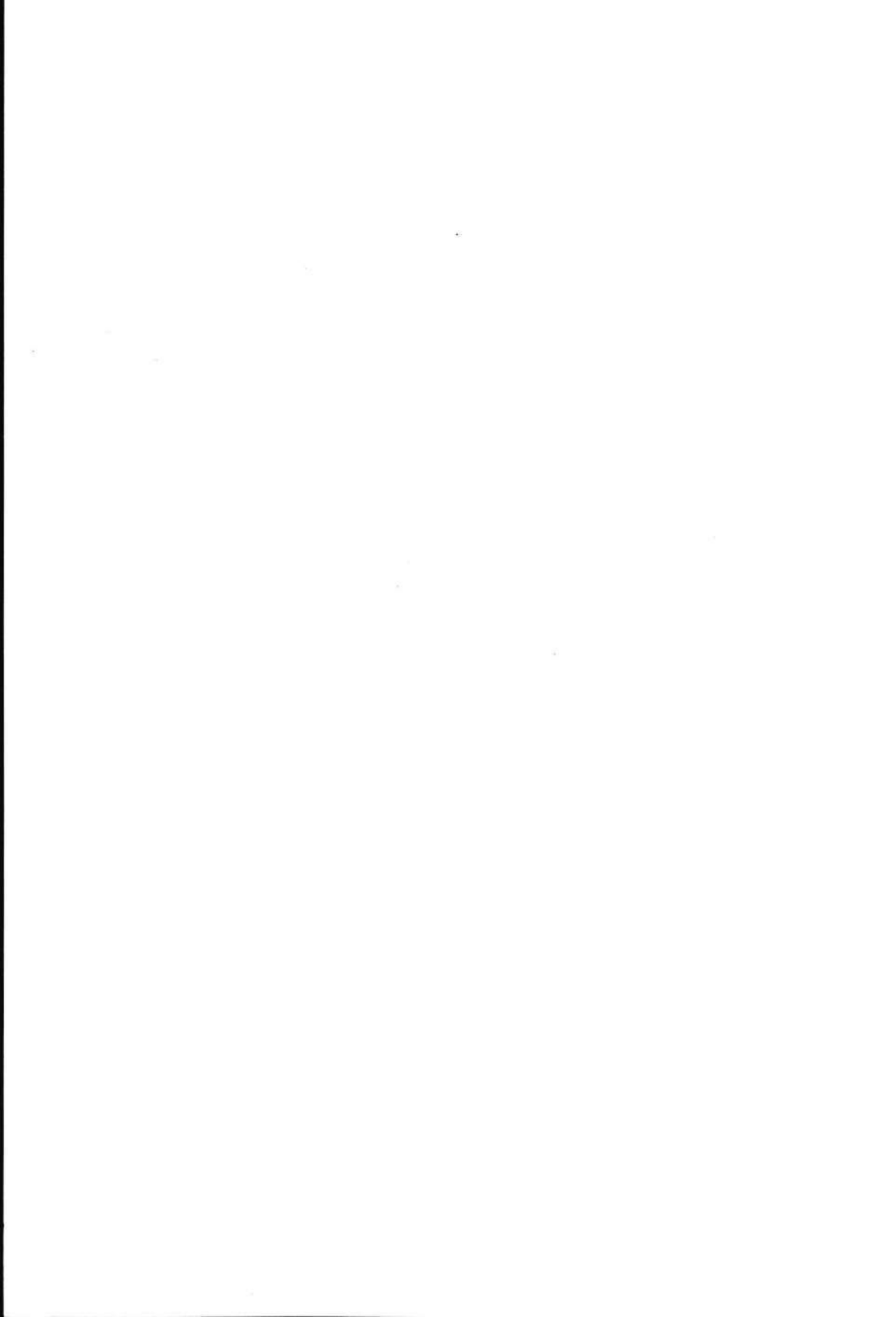


## FOREWORD

“Since it is the essence of history to relate outstanding events whether good or bad, which in the case of a biography, enable a true judgement to be formed about an individual person, the publisher of a history containing nothing but favourable material wants to throw dust in his readers’ eyes. By the very fact of undertaking to write history he makes a profession of telling both the bad and the good, and so it follows that by concealing the bad he is believed to affirm its non-existence, since had it existed, he was under an obligation to reveal it...

...Should anyone be unwilling to set down aught but the good, let him call his book, not History, but Select History. From all this it is plain that when we gird ourselves to write history properly so called, and all the more if it deals with religious and sacred events, we must observe the essential laws with the greatest strictness and scrupulosity, that the truth may be preserved and defended...”

*(An excerpt from a letter written by Francis Sacchini, defending his publication of his History of the Jesuits, dated 6th March 1616.) See J. BRODERICK, The Progress of the Jesuits, London, 1946, p. 307.*



## **PRIMARY SOURCES**

### **ARCHIVES CONSULTED, ABBREVIATIONS USED**

- WAA = Westminster Archdiocesan Archive: the Bourne Papers.
- SAA = Southwark Archdiocesan Archive:  
The East Battersea file = (E/B)  
The West Battersea file = (W/B)  
The Wandsworth file.
- ACI = Archivio Collegio Irlandese:  
The Kirby Papers = KP.
- SRC = Archivio S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide  
Scritture Riferite nei Congressi: Anglia, Vol. 27  
Lettere e Decreti della Sacra Congregazione e Biglietti di Mons. Segretario,  
vol. 383.
- ACS = Archivio Centrale Salesiano  
(Direzione Generale, Opera don Bosco, Via della Pisana, 1111, Roma 00163)  
Fondo Don Bosco: The microfiche collection of the Don Bosco papers  
numbered from 1-310. Much of the early Material concerning the English  
foundation can be found here under the names of different correspondents,  
or the foundation title.  
Fondo Don Rua: The rest of the material in the Archive down to the death of  
Don Rua has been numbered and microfiched, however, it is still to be  
duplicated. The references are to the microfiche numbers, available in the  
Archive.  
Verbali delle Riunioni Capitolari: The private minutes of the Superior Chapter  
contain many surprising details about the Province.  
Visite Straordinarie: those of Don P. Virion and Don Candela proved of most  
interest.  
Corrispondenza Ispettoriale Inghilterra  
House Files  
Mortuary Letters.
- ATT = Archive of the Archdiocese of Turin  
Fr Aldo Giraudo SDB of the Crocetta Community in Turin was kind enough  
to let me see an unpublished letter of Don Bosco to Laurence Gastaldi in  
England, which he discovered in the archive.
- BC.LSE = The London School of Economics  
The Charles Booth Collection  
The transcripts of his interviewer's impression of contemporary Battersea, and  
the religious influences are invaluable, outsider evidence.
- SDB.GB = Salesian Provincial Archives, British Province:  
(Salesian Provincial House, 266, Wellington Road North, Stockport Cheshire.  
SK4 2QR.)  
DL = The Donnellan Letters  
ML = The Macey Letters

House Files

The Chronicle of the English Province  
J. Noonan: Don Bosco's England  
Mortuary Letters  
Profession Book.

SDB.Dublin = Salesian Provincial Archives, Dublin Province  
(Crumlin House, St. Teresa's Rd. Crumlin, Dublin 12.)  
Fr Sutherland's account of the Foundation in Ireland.

SDB.Brussels = Salesian Archive of the Belgian Province  
(Oeuvres de Don Bosco, Rue du Dahlia, 11, Bruxelles 1030)  
The published works of Fr F. Scaloni.

Salesian House Archives

Battersea: The Battersea House Chronicle  
The Battersea School Magazine  
Sacred Heart Parish Archives, Trott St.  
Farnborough: The house chronicles and Parish Registers  
Chertsey: the parish Note book § (the houses now closed have their archives  
at Stockport)  
Copsewood College, Pallaskenry, Co. Limerick, Ireland  
The Copsewood House chronicle  
The House Council Minutes Book.

Salesian Sisters Archives

(Eastworth House, Eastworth Road, Chertsey, Surrey)  
Chronicles and correspondence)

Franco Family Archive, Cantavenna, Piedmont, Italy  
c/o Sna. Rubini Via della Poma, Pavia

Some papers of Fr Franco's, dating back to the period between the Wars, exist  
in the old family farm house. I was kindly given access to these and also to  
Dr G. Franco's family memoir on his brother's life.

Archive of the Papal Nunciature

(Papal Nunciature, Parkside, Wimbledon London)  
Fr McElligot's Protest and Fr Tozzi reply.

Archive of the Institute of Charity (Rosminians, English Province)

Derryswood, Wonersh, near Guildford, Surrey  
The Cardiff File contains some very interesting unpublished letters of Laurence  
Gastaldi.

Archive of Portsmouth Diocese

Thanks to Fr Isherwood the Diocesan Archivist and his extremely well  
organised Archive Catalogue it was possible to see that there is little or  
nothing about the foundation at Farnborough before 1930 in the Archive,  
without being able to make a visit. Much material was destroyed during the  
wartime blitz of Portsmouth.

Limerick Diocesan Archive (Bishop's House, Limerick, Ireland)

The Unpublished diaries of Bishop Denis Hallinan and his personal  
correspondence.



Diocese of Meath Archive

(Mullingar Cathedral, Co. West Meath, Ireland).

Mondovì Archdiocesan Archives Piedmont Italy

My thanks are due to Professor Franca Mellano for a letter from Archbishop Gastaldi to Archbishop Pozzi (24 May 1877).

SDB.San Francisco. = Archives of the Western Province USA

(Provincial Office, 1100 Franklin St., San Francisco California Personal files on the early Irish Salesians).

### **Published material**

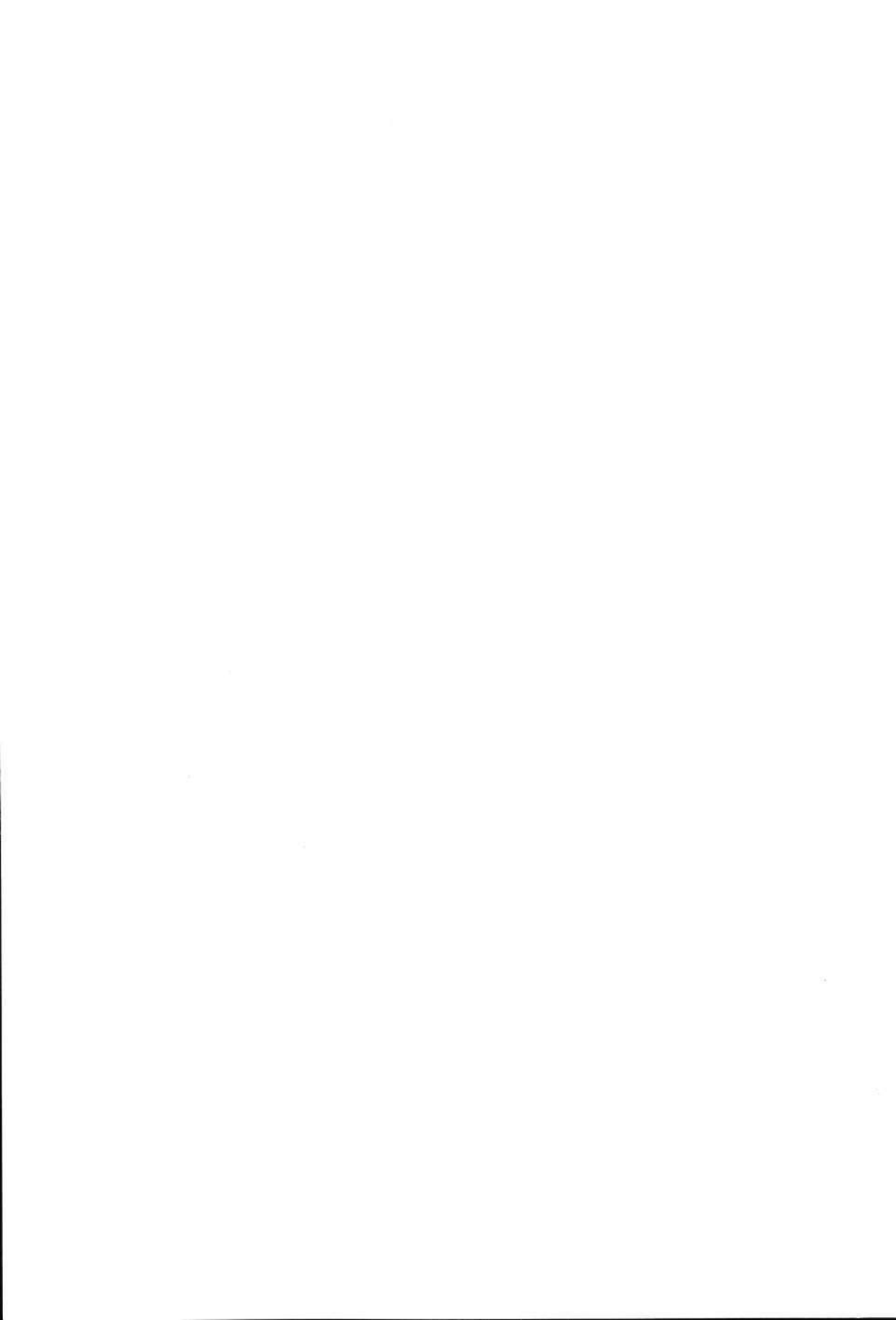
*The Dublin Review* has some interesting material on Cardinal Manning concern for the Catholic education of the poor, in the decade before the Salesians arrived.

*The Tablet* has Bishop Coffin's appeal for funds for the Sacred Heart Mission, Trott St.

*Salesian School Magazine* (Salesian Press, Surrey Lane, London 1911-1925).

*Sheldrakes Gazette* (a local Aldershot and Farnborough Newspaper).

*Aldershot News* (available on microfilm, Aldershot Public Library).



## INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The centenary of any foundation provides an important stimulus to historical work on its origins and development. When that institution is a religious order or, as in this case, a province of that order, then there is the added stimulus and difficulty of knowing that the object of study is still a living body whose members may well have more than a simply academic interest in the outcome of such research. This work has been undertaken in the firm belief that only with a scholarly approach to the evidence can the cause of authentic self-discovery be served.

What follows is an attempt to write a history of the foundation and development of the Salesians in England, from the origins in the 1840s up to 1930, with a postscript on the crisis of 1939-40. The closing date was determined by the fact that the *Archivio Centrale Salesiano* in Rome is closed to researchers from 1931. The research is based largely on archival material which was in great part unavailable to earlier writers.

It is largely restricted to a study of the English and early Irish houses rather than the whole province which at one time included not only England but also South Africa, Ireland and Malta (though only from 1928), Guernsey in the Channel Islands (a house of the exiled French Salesians) and the Falkland Islands (originally belonging to the Argentinian Salesians). The argument for this course of action is partly that South Africa and Malta are difficult to visit in order to gather archive material, but also that they were founded directly from Italy and remained during this period largely outside the mainstream of the Province's activity in the period studied. A study of the files on them held in the Salesian Central Archives shows this even from the amount of direct correspondence which took place with the superiors in Turin largely ignoring the English Provincial. Further, since one of the main themes to emerge from the study is the extent of cultural adaptation and even submersion that took place in the England, to have to deal with two other such diverse cultures and ecclesiastical systems would have required another volume.

It is also true that Battersea remains the central focus for this study, partly because it was the mother House of the Province, at times both Novitiate and Studentate as well as the Provincial's residence and also because it remained the largest community in the Province for most of the time covered, but most of all because it generated the largest amount of evidence, in terms of chronicles, correspondence and even published material, which is sadly missing from most of the early houses as was already noted by Don Rua in his criticisms of Fr Macey's visitation reports.

One of the central questions to emerge from this chronological study of the Salesians in England has considerable modern relevance, namely, what are the main factors which appear to influence the growth, development and also the decline of a religious order. Raymond Hostie highlights this theme in his large-scale study of religious orders, *Vie et mort des ordres religieux*.<sup>1</sup>

[This book] aims solely at highlighting all the useful data with a view to discovering how religious institutes — which group human beings in impressive numbers, linking them together for life, and inserting them into astonishingly lively movements-[how they] are born, develop and come to an end.<sup>2</sup>

The study of the foundation and development of the Salesians in England can perhaps provide a particular case study of the main factors involved in the process described by Hostie. It must, however, be frankly acknowledged that it may be impossible to draw any general conclusions from what is a very particular story of only a small part of one of the Roman Catholic Church's largest religious orders.

Hostie outlines three particular phases in the growth of a religious order: birth, expansion and extinction. The source of the birth and growth of any institute, he identifies as being the 'dynamic ferment' which takes place in the encounter of a particular founder and his first disciples. He sees this experience as leading to the emergence of the group's sense of identity and its ability to attract others. During its second phase, this is often formalised by being set down in a rule often accompanied by a period of expansion. This is followed by a stage of stabilization which according to Hostie, leads after two or three hundred years to an inexorable decline, having reached the end of its natural span. He recognises, however, that there are quite large numbers of exceptions to his hypothesis e.g. the Benedictines, Carthusians, Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites, Servites, and Augustinians. He suggests, therefore, that there are two models for survival. The first he calls 'stabilized survival', which seems to be characteristic of some monastic foundations e.g. the Carthusians, who are radically disengaged from contact with the world's atmosphere and do not influence the pattern of growth of new religious orders. The second model he calls 'the regenerated', which manifest an effort to recover their initial vitality by a return to the sources. For some of these it is merely a

<sup>1</sup> R. HOSTIE, *Vie et mort des ordres religieux*, Paris, 1972.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9: "Elle vise uniquement à en dégager toutes les données utiles en vue de découvrir comment les instituts religieux — groupant des hommes en nombre imposant, les liant entre eux à vie et les insérant dans des ensembles étonnamment vivaces — sont nés, se sont développés et se sont éteints."



reactionary return to the primitive rule of the order. For others it involves an effort to rediscover the spirit of the primitive origins but based on deepening their own experience of the original ferment.

For other reforms, the return to the sources is not just a reactionary phenomenon. Of course, they also mark their concern to rediscover the spirit of the primitive origins. But they do it by deepening their own experience. Also, is it not astonishing that this return to the sources is paralleled with spectacular innovations, absolutely out of the blue.<sup>3</sup>

This is not just a question of an historicist 'turning back the clock' but an effort to reinterpret the original 'insight' in the light of today's needs. The central feature which seems capable of prolonging the life of a religious order is a rediscovery of that original 'dynamic ferment', experienced in the changed circumstances and corresponding to contemporary needs.

The Second Vatican Council's decree on the Renewal of Religious Life, *Perfectae Caritatis*, defined the renewal which it sought to promote:

[It] comprises both a constant return to the sources of the whole Christian Life and to the primitive inspiration of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our own time.<sup>4</sup>

Hence the historian would appear to have an important task in highlighting the nature of the primitive inspiration and tracing its development and adaptation to different cultures and for different generations.

### The original inspiration of the Salesians

In the era of the Catholic Restoration which reached a high point in the First Vatican Council's definition of Papal Infallibility, and in reaction to the hostility of contemporary liberal ideology, the Church seemed to adopt something of a siege mentality. The whole style of church administration encouraged the development of centralised decision making and uniform codes of practice, procedure and training. Such an atmosphere was unlikely to encourage innovation and experimentation, much less dialogue with the outside world. In reaction to the general secularisation

<sup>3</sup> R. HOSTIE, *op. cit.* The stabilized survivor see p. 314-315. The regenerated ones, p. 315-317: "Pour d'autres réformes, le retour aux sources n'est nullement un phénomène réactionnel. Bien entendu, elles aussi marquent leur souci de retrouver l'esprit du noyau primitif. Mais elles le font en approfondissant leur propre expérience. Aussi n'est-ce pas étonnant que le retour aux sources va de pair avec des innovations spectaculaires, absolument inédites."

<sup>4</sup> A. FLANNERY (ed.), *Vatican Council II*, Dublin, 1977, p. 612, n. 2.

and anti-clericalism of the state, Catholics were encouraged to build up their own alternative institutions. Against this background, Hostie comments on the foundation of the Salesians:

It is not an exaggeration to say that his [Don Bosco's] creation is one of the most revolutionary for the atmosphere it evolved and the surroundings it put up with. Its explosive expansion recalls the most successful of foundations. Founded in 1859, his Congregation amounted to 3,256 members by 1900, this figure had grown to 8,493 by 1930 and by 1965 to 22,383. Is it not significant that Don Bosco had such difficulty in getting his initiative approved so that it might be developed? It risked departing from the beaten track.<sup>5</sup>

His originality, according to Hostie, lay in the fact that he,

...did not allow himself to be driven by *a priori* (principles) or by already fixed ideas. All his work breathed a grandeur of soul and a largeness of vision.

If he launched an initiative it was what was demanded by the concrete circumstances and responded to a precise need. The boys whom he gathered drew in their companions because he offered them what they longed for. His co-workers were won over by his freshness (of outlook) and his good humour, by his daring and his trust. He himself lived untiringly among his boys, of whom a good number became his co-workers. As they joined him the idea naturally occurred to him to ratify this fact by consecrating it before God.

A rule did not have to be invented, it was enough to put into writing in due and proper form, the life-style which the group lived. And Don Bosco submitted his rule for official approval. It was returned to him without delay with one comment which left no doubt: unacceptable as it stands. They [the Authorities in Rome] objected that it was not 'religious [life]'. What would become of community life, if the Salesians did not have a refectory and dormitory separate from those occupied by their pupils? Where would religious life end up, if they did not have a uniform habit and if they contended themselves with clothing which hardly distinguished them from their pupils?

Don Bosco had to rework his rule many times before it became acceptable to the hierarchy's demands, anxious as they were to model new initiatives according to the formulas of an age long past. Fortunately, he had the wisdom — or was it the sense of humour — not

<sup>5</sup> R. HOSTIE, *op. cit.*, p. 244: "Il n'est pas exagéré de dire que sa création est une des plus révolutionnaires par l'atmosphère qu'elle dégage et l'ambiance qu'elle entretient. Son expansion explosive rappelle les fondations les plus réussies. Fondée en 1859 sa congrégation compte dès 1900 3526 membres, ce chiffre monte en 1930 à 8493 et en 1965 il atteint 22383. N'est-ce pas significatif que Don Bosco ait eu un tel mal à faire admettre son initiative telle qu'elle s'était développée? Elle risquait de sortir des sentiers battus."

to fuss about formulas. He adhered to the letter. He saved his spirit.<sup>6</sup>

Hostie's enthusiastic reflections on the Salesian charism or Spirit have to be balanced by a closer study of the historical influences and background from which Don Bosco came and the particular dimensions of his vision which were specially dynamic and transcended the culturally conditioned outlook of his own time.

It is certain, as Fr Stella has shown, that in many respects Don Bosco's own upbringing and clerical formation in the reactionary political and religious atmosphere of post-Napoleonic Piedmont deeply shaped his outlook on politics and religion. One notes particularly his attitude to Protestantism and ideas like civil marriage and the Roman question.

On the other hand, the single principle to which everything else, be it political ideas or theological presuppositions, was subject was his burning desire to work for the good of the young. He began his earliest Introduction to the Salesian rule with the words:

In every age it has been a special care of the ministers of the Church to work according to their strength for the spiritual benefit of the young. For upon their good or bad education depends a happy or sad future for the customs of Society. Our divine Saviour himself gave proof of this truth by his own deeds when accomplishing his divine mission on earth, by inviting the youngsters to come close to him with special affection. Let the little children come to me.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 244: "Jean Bosco ne se laisse pas conduire par des *a priori* ou des idées toutes faites. Toute son oeuvre respire grandeur d'âme et largeur de vue. S'il lance une initiative, c'est qu'elle est suscitée par des circonstances concrètes et répond à un besoin précis. Les garçons qu'il groupe, amènent leurs camarades parce qu'il leur offre ce à quoi ils aspirent. Ses collaborateurs sont conquis par sa franchise et sa bonhomie, par sa hardiesse et sa confiance. Les maisons qu'il érige, les destinations auxquelles il les affecte, l'organisation dont il les dote, répondent chaque fois à une nécessité concrète, Lui-même, vit inlassablement parmi ses garçons, dont bon nombre deviennent ses collaborateurs, Puisqu'ils se joignent à lui, l'idée lui vient tout naturellement d'entériner ce fait en le consacrant devant Dieu. Une règle ne doit pas être inventée; il suffit de mettre par écrit, en bonne et due forme, la façon dont vit le groupe. Et Don Bosco soumet sa règle à la approbation réglementaire. Elle lui est retournée sans tarder avec une mention qui ne laisse aucun doute: inacceptable comme telle. On lui objecte qu'elle n'est pas religieuse. Que devient la vie communautaire, si les Salésiens n'ont pas de réfectoire et de dortoir séparés des locaux occupés par leurs élèves? Ou va la vie religieuse s'ils n'ont pas un habit uniforme et se contentent d'un habillement qui ne les distingue guère de leurs pupilles? Don Bosco aura à retravailler plusieurs fois sa règle avant qu'elle ne devienne acceptable pour les instances hiérarchiques, soucieuses de modeler les initiatives nouvelles selon les formules approuvées du temps jadis. Il a heureusement la sagesse — ou est-ce l'humour? — de ne pas finasser sur les formules. Il se ralliera à la lettre. Il sauvera son esprit."

<sup>7</sup> F. MOTTO, *Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales (1858-1875)*, Roma, 1982, p. 58: "In ogni tempo fu speciale sollecitudine de' ministri della chiesa di adoperarsi secondo le loro forze per promuovere il bene spirituale della gioventù. Dalla buona o cattiva educazione

Don Bosco's life was dedicated to the young and he was prepared to move heaven and earth to save them. This consuming desire expressed itself in a willingness to try anything and adapt to any system in order to be able to work for the salvation of the young. This distinguished him as one of the most creative and successful religious founders of modern times and at the same time as an important dynamic figure in the development of popular culture in late 19th century Italy.

One of the earliest and most authoritative attempts to delineate the Salesian charism was that of Fr Eugenio Ceria in the *Annali della Società Salesiana* (Volume 1 1941). He highlighted three main characteristics of the Salesian spirit which are worth considering: a prodigious activity or hard work, a special approach to piety, and the family style of life.

In the minutes of the Superior Chapter, Don Bosco noted,

There is certainly a great willingness to work among the members of the Congregation.<sup>8</sup>

But he insisted that this work had to be supernaturally motivated:

Remember that on earth we work for heaven.<sup>9</sup>

The second feature Fr Ceria highlighted was Don Bosco's particular view of piety.

In Don Bosco's view piety is the attitude of souls which avoids offending God however slightly and does everything for the Lord.<sup>10</sup>

Particular monastic style religious practices were secondary to this interior disposition, basically he considered the ordinary Christians' religious practices were enough:

The active life towards which the Society more especially tends, renders its members unable to perform many exercises of piety in common. They shall therefore supply for these by giving one another good example and by fulfilling perfectly the general duties of good christians.<sup>11</sup>

The third feature was a family style of life, like that of a family of

di essa dipende un buono o tristo avvenire ai costumi della società. Il medesimo Divin Salvatore ci diede col fatto evidente prova di questa verità quando compieva in terra la sua divina missione invitando con parziale affetto i fanciulli di appressarsi a lui. *Sinite parvulos venire ad me.*"

<sup>8</sup> E. CERIA, *Annali della Società Salesiana*, Torino, 1941, vol. 1, p. 723: "Nei membri della Congregazione c'è proprio una gran voglia di lavorare."

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 725: "Ritieni che in terra lavoriamo per il cielo."

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 726: "Nel concetto di Don Bosco la pietà è disposizione degli animi a schivare l'offesa di Dio anche leggiera e a fare tutte le cose per il Signore."

<sup>11</sup> *Constitutions of the Society of St. Francis of Sales*, Madras, 1967, Cons. 152.

brothers surrounding their father, a familiar informal style which avoided even invoking formal religious Obedience as far as possible. This was coupled with a willingness to get to know and adapt to the ideas of the people of the time. In this context Don Bosco's famous remark about the Salesian religious habit being shirt sleeves corresponded to the sensibilities of a culture which saw the old mendicant religious orders with their medieval habits as little more than parasites on society, especially the poor and superstitious.

These characteristics, the practical drive to an overriding apostolic purpose, a simple and adaptable prayer life, and a warm informal style of life meant that for aspirants the transition from being a youngster at the Oratory to becoming initially a part time helper and student and finally consecrating their lives as Salesians by religious vows was not too difficult in what was becoming an increasing anti-clerical Italy. But these same characteristics meant that the appeal of Don Bosco's spirit was more easily made across the cultural boundaries as well.

In examining the history of the Salesian work in England, one should not be surprised if the originality of Don Bosco's vision sometimes lost something in the attempt to adapt it to a different culture and to an age which succeeded his own. Nevertheless, were that process of adaptation not to have been attempted and creatively undertaken, then his vision was and is inexorably doomed to sterility and extinction.

The only published accounts of the foundation and development of the Salesians in England appear in three Salesian publications: the *Bollettino Salesiano*, the *Memorie Biografiche*, and the *Annali della Società Salesiana*. The first of these was published from 1877 by Don Bosco to promote the spread of his ideas and spirit. It was also the official organ of the Salesian Cooperators, or lay-branch of his co-workers and included information on the development of the Salesian work in England from 1887 onwards, being largely abstracts of letters from Don Bonavia who seems to have acted as the unofficial correspondent. Its aim, of course was to encourage the interest and financial support of the readership which stretched from the Roncalli household in Sotto il Monte to the palace of the conte de Chambord.<sup>12</sup>

The *Memorie Biografiche*, the nineteen volume life of Don Bosco completed by Fr E. Ceria, recorded the negotiations which led to the foundation at Battersea in 1887. Fr Ceria had before him the papers available in the *Archivio Centrale Salesiano*, but his version of events there gives no account of how the first Irishmen, like McKiernan, Donnellan and O'Grady came to be studying in Turin, or indeed of how the Countess de

<sup>12</sup> P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica, vol. I Vita e opera*, Roma, 1979, p. 219.

Stacpoole's petition to the Pope came to be drawn up and accepted. Fr Ceria's lack of access to the relevant English archives and also the fact that his main purpose was to tell the story of Don Bosco's life mean that his account of the English foundation remains somewhat incomplete.<sup>13</sup>

The third account of the foundation and development of the Salesians in England comes in the four-volume *Annali della Società Salesiana* also by Fr Ceria, and completed in the post-war period. This history of the development of the Society deals with England as hardly more than a footnote to its wider concerns. While the numerical development of the Society in England was hardly significant compared with Italy or Spain, yet it was here in England, that the early Salesians first had to encounter a modern industrial society with its uncomprehending, if not totally secular, alien culture. While it is true that Fr Ceria scrupulously followed the sources available to him in the central archives, it would seem that he was not privy to the confidential Visitation Reports of 1908-9 and 1926, or indeed to the Provincial correspondence for the later part of period. Further, his only English sources seem to have been whatever personal reminiscences and heresay evidence Fr Tozzi, the pre-war Provincial, could gather.<sup>14</sup>

One general criticism of Fr Ceria's work that might be made is that he appears a little too impressed by the explosive growth of the Society, so that he cannot envisage any real setbacks to be possible. Even a historian as

<sup>13</sup> E. CERIA, *Memorie Biografiche*, Torino, 1937, vol. 18, ch. XX, pp. 447-456 for his account of the Origins of the Foundation at Batteredsea.

<sup>14</sup> E. CERIA, *Annali della Società Salesiana*, Torino, 1941-1951, vols. 1-4. By the time Don Ceria had come to write his account of the English foundation in the *Annali*, he had discovered a good deal more about the preparations which Don Bosco had made by preparing some young Irishmen as Salesians. However, he seems not to have had access to the Irish College archive or the Donnellan letters. For his account see vol. 1, pp. 618-621.

In volume 2, his account of the foundation and development at Burwash would appear to depend heavily on somewhat glorified memoirs: "...Ma poi si fece di più: furono trasferiti a Burwash il noviziato e lo studentato filosofico, iniziati già a Batteredsea, con Don Enea Tozzi Direttore, maestro e parroco. Il luogo si prestava a meraviglia, essendo un'amena campagna, lungi dai distraenti rumori dei centri popolosi. Se ci fu da praticare la povertà, la cosa tornava a bene per giovani chierici, che dovevano addestrarsi alla vita religiosa. E per opera di quel 'pio e zelante figlio di Don Bosco', come è chiamato Don Tozzi in una memoria domestica, la Casa di Burwash divenne un modello di Casa salesiana" (vol. 2, p. 654).

An example of his overall vision comes at the beginning of his section on Burwash: "— Avanti, avanti, sempre! — Era questa una voce che sembrava risonare incessantemente all'orecchio di don Rua. Voce stimolatrice d'oltretomba nel ricordo degli esempi e delle parole di don Bosco: voce echeggiante dal cielo nella missione affidata dalla Provvidenza alla Società, senza limiti di spazio né di tempo: voce mondiale elevantesi dal concerto di domande numerose, pressanti, talora accorate con cui s'imploravano aiuti che solo per opera dei Salesiani si pensava di poter avere" (vol. 2, p. 653).



careful as he undoubtedly was, is unable to avoid being impressed by the outlook of his own age.

Much more obviously flawed is the unpublished work of Fr. J. Noonan: *Don Bosco's England: An account of some early disciples of St John Bosco and their work for God in London*, which deals with the Salesian work in England from 1887 till the death of Fr Scaloni. Although it certainly contains some valuable first hand experience, such as the first night in Surrey House and the theological examinations held by Bishop Amigo,<sup>15</sup> yet its overwhelming concern is to hallow the past and the memories of those 'Men of God', the early Salesians of the Province, almost undeterred by a lack of documentary evidence. In his preface, Fr Noonan explained his purpose and authority for writing.

The present account was undertaken because at the time of writing, some half dozen members of the Salesian Society who had joined in those early days were still living, and their memories of the early struggles, sacrifices, ideals and doings of the 'Men of God' whom they had joined were worth recording, and would preserve many items of interest to later members of the Society.

The account is not meant to be a full record of the early doings of the Salesians in London, but sufficient is recalled to preserve the memory of 'Men of God', whose personal aims were selfless, they being consumed by the glory of God and the Salvation of Souls...

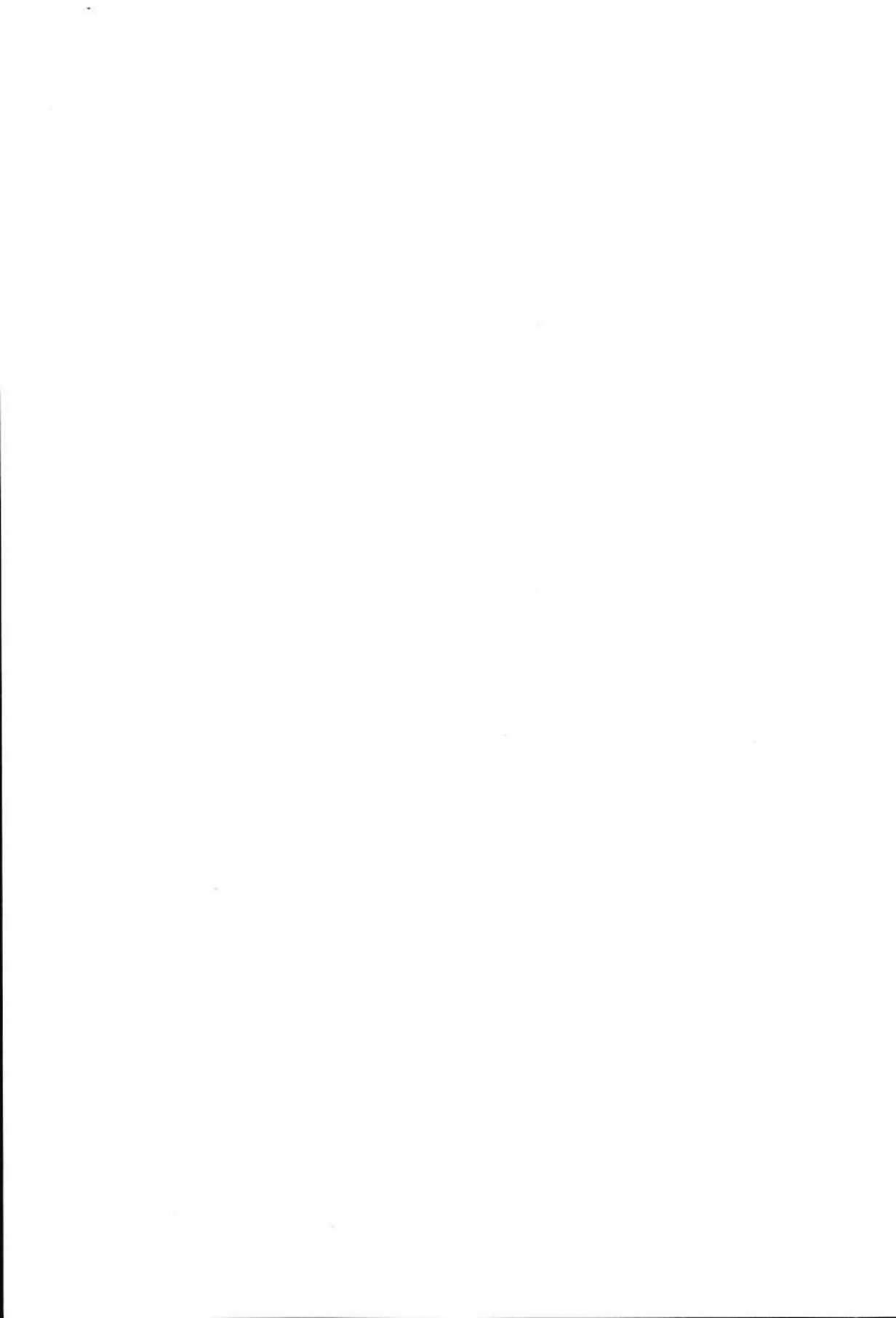
...When letters and more documentary evidence have been collected, it is hoped that at a later date a more fertile pen will put on record a fuller account of the subjects of this short account.<sup>16</sup>

From this one can gather that Fr Noonan's work is more a compilation of memoirs than a documented history. However, he has left us some invaluable information such as the details he gathered from the business partner of Fr Macey's brother about Fr Macey's family background.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, though he prepared it for publication in 1948, when it was read by some of the other survivors it was felt to be too uncritical and was never published.

<sup>15</sup> SDB.GB, J. NOONAN, *Don Bosco's England*. Typescript. For his account of the theology examinations Bishop Amigo insisted on administering: see Part VI pp. 9-13; for his account of the first night at Surrey Lodge Part I, pp. 83-84.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Preface to Part I.

<sup>17</sup> SDB.GB. File of Deeds and Agreements: Letter and memoir from Mr. Mark F. Jeffrey of 18, Belle Vue Rd. Salisbury dated Aug. 17th, 1928, regarding Fr Macey's background.





## AN ITALIAN VISION OF ENGLAND

“An endless plain, crowded with people, blanketed in heavy fog...” (St. Dominic Savio)

### The Italian Liberal view of England

During the second half of the 19th century, Europe witnessed the development of several new nation states. Italy, the first of these, changed from being ‘merely a geographical expression’ into a developing modern state. This process of ‘Risorgimento’ or national rebirth was stimulated, it is true, by a widespread dislike of the Austrians, and encouraged by the growing confidence of the professional and commercial classes. It was only achieved, however, by the careful planning and skilful statesmanship of Count Camillo Benso di Cavour (1810-1861).

For Cavour, England’s success as a modern political and industrial nation exercised a profound effect on his political thinking. He viewed it as the model of a progressive political and industrial society, a middle way between the autocratic traditionalism of Austria and the radical instability of France. Through his friendship with the British Minister in Turin,<sup>1</sup> and his visits to England in 1832, 1834 and 1856,<sup>2</sup> he had first hand knowledge both of the political system and the latest developments in industry, agriculture and social reform. Although he was unable to attract much active political support in the struggle against Austria, he did manage to secure a degree of British sympathy for the idea of Italian unification.

Far from being a convinced nationalist, Cavour found himself forced

<sup>1</sup> Sir James Hudson, the British Minister in Turin, was deeply involved in Piedmontese politics. Massimo d’Azeglio blamed him for his fall from power in 1852, and Hudson was quite prepared to approach King Victor Emmanuel II several times in 1860, in order to bring Cavour to power. He also assisted at Cavour’s death bed, when Cavour received the last sacraments, despite being under ecclesiastical censure and wrote of Cavour, “...in private life he was the warmest and most genial of friends.” See D. MACK SMITH, *Cavour*, London, 1985, p. 182-3, pp. 272, 274.

<sup>2</sup> Cavour’s admiration for the British ability to work together and compromise, even in business, was unstinting:

See D. MACK SMITH, *op. cit.*, p. 19: “The English have learned how to work together; they know how to discuss without altercation and to respect individual opinions. Even the smallest minorities can expect to be heard with attention and often a single voice will suffice to postpone a decision until clarification on an issue succeeds in producing a consensus.”

to achieve the national dream to avoid the highjacking of the Risorgimento by the radical republicans like Mazzini and Garibaldi. Cavour admired the so-called balance of the British Constitution and understood the key element in this balance to be the aristocratic element in the British system.

He was fascinated too by the evidence of rapid economic development and its causes, as he perceived them. He met Nassau William Senior, a famous economist, and Alexis de Tocqueville, the famous constitutional historian. Cavour spent his time in England inspecting gas works, railways and other developments in industry and agriculture. With social reform in the air, he met Edwin Chadwick and was influenced by his views on Poor Law reform and the penal system. He was described by Palmerston as, 'one of the most distinguished patriots who have adorned the history of any country'. Cavour was determined to bring Piedmont to the forefront of Italian politics by a series of political, social and economic reforms.

One of the planks of his reform policy, which incidentally secured the cooperation of Rattazzi and the parliamentary Radicals, was the Siccardi Law of 1855.<sup>3</sup> These limited anti-clerical measures can be seen as marking his appreciation of the Church of England in its reformed state. His cry of a 'free church in a free state' had, no doubt, more to do with giving himself a free hand in the economic reforms he saw to be necessary to Piedmont's modernisation, than with freeing the Church from the State's control. Still, Cavour believed that the Church should be a 'useful, progressive institution' in any state. His chief concern, therefore, was to support the removal of the rigid grasp of mortmain over church property and of reactionary ideas in education.

### **The British Liberal Italian Connection**

As a result of the real contribution which Piedmont's forces had made in the Crimean War and the sympathy that Cavour had won in London for his vision of Piedmont's and Italy's economic and political development, the British Government under Lord Palmerston looked sympathetically on the dramatic events of the war of independence in 1860. During this critical period when Piedmont annexed the duchies of central Italy and the Papal States, and Garibaldi defeated the Neapolitan army and prepared Sicily and Naples for Italian Unity, Lord John Russell, with Palmerston's approval sent a dispatch to Hudson the British Minister in Turin which was published and greeted with great rejoicing in Italy.

<sup>3</sup> D. MACK SMITH, *op. cit.*, p. 78: "As he explained to a friend, the papacy, 'was the chief cause of the misfortunes of Italy' and by taking a firm line with Rome he might win broad liberal backing, at a highly dangerous moment, when the King was undermining the principle of responsible parliamentary government."

It explicitly stated that the British Government had no intention of breaking off diplomatic relations with Vittorio Emmanuele's government but referred on the contrary to, "the gratifying prospect of a people building up the edifice of their liberties and consolidating the work of their independence".<sup>4</sup>

A further indication of the British liberal attitude to Italian unification is shown by another circular to the powers which was not in fact sent because Queen Victoria insisted it be submitted to the whole Cabinet. It stated provocatively of Rome and Venice still under Papal and Austrian rule that:

It is to be hoped that these two cities so thoroughly Italian in character may finally enjoy as great a degree of well being and good government as the rest of Italy. More significantly it warned that if any other Power should indulge in forcible interference then Her Majesty's government will hold themselves free to act in such a manner as the rights of nations, the independence of Italy and the interests of Europe may seem to require.<sup>5</sup>

These statements reflect the sympathy and support which the process of Italian Unification under Piedmont inspired in liberal circles in England.

Among the most significant young politicians who interested himself in Italian affairs was William Ewart Gladstone, the Father of Mid-Victorian Liberalism. He had translated Farini's history of the Papal States and had it published in England in 1851.<sup>6</sup> After visiting one of the revolutionaries of 1848 in a Neapolitan gaol he wrote and published *Two Letters to Lord Aberdeen* in the same year.<sup>7</sup> Gladstone's enthusiasm for Italy and his appreciation of the romantic figure of Garibaldi led to the rapturous popular welcome he received on his visit to England in 1864. Gladstone's vision of an Italy free from repressive autocratic and out-moded regimes fitted in well with his disapproval of what he regarded as the intransigence and obscurantist claims of the Roman Pontiff. He wrote against both the Syllabus of Errors and the definition of Papal Infallibility. His concern with the Vatican Council was that its decrees would,

'arouse crude opinion... working blindly about like hot and cold moist and dry in Ovid's Chaos'; they also made Gladstone himself particularly anxious about securities for denominational freedoms...<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> H. HEARDER, *Italy in the Age of the Risorgimento 1790-1870*, London, 1986, Russell's Dispatch, p. 235.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Circular, p. 236.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Gladstone's translation, p. 110.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, his two Letters, p. 144.

<sup>8</sup> J.P. PARRY, *Democracy and Religion*, Cambridge, 1986, p. 295.

At home, his influence on English politics was enormous spanning the half century from 1851 till his death in 1898. He successively held the offices of Chancellor of the Exchequer, Leader of the House of Commons and Prime Minister. If there is any historical basis for the visit of the Minister of Queen Victoria to the Oratory in Turin, it may well refer to Gladstone, well known for his interest in social work among street children.<sup>9</sup> The British Liberal support for the Italian Risorgimento stemmed partly from the fact that in the Piedmontese Royal Family and Parliamentary regime, they thought they recognised something very similar to the British constitution abroad and at a popular level it appealed to the groundswell of anti-popery which could always be assured of widespread support, and in fact was one of the few grounds on which the loosely agreed segments of Liberalism could be united.<sup>10</sup> In the Italian question as in the Irish question, for Gladstone, the problem he faced was that his personal policy was incompatible with the views of either his Non-Conformist supporters or his alliance with the Irish Roman Catholics.<sup>11</sup> The problem that Gladstone faced was so often radical religious and political views went together, and his efforts to build a Liberal majority with Irish support was often frustrated.

Conservatism and the Catholic Church went hand in hand; so too did Liberalism and freethought.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Italian Catholic view of England**

England seems to have exercised a peculiar fascination for some Italians both statesmen and clerics, in the nineteenth century. Like Cavour in their interest in England, though from a very different perspective, a churchman such as Fr Antonio Rosmini, philosopher and founder of the Institute of Charity, saw the British Empire, with its stable administration as a great opportunity for missionary work among the peoples of Asia. Through some of his earliest disciples, his Institute of Charity became instrumental in bringing to England the zeal and enthusiasm of the Italian religious orders, which promoted a new confidence among the Catholic community. Another Italian, Blessed Domenico Barberi, the holy Passionist priest, despite some early misgivings about Rosmini's Institute, conceived a great passion for the English Mission, eventually crowning the first stage

<sup>9</sup> MB VII 556.

<sup>10</sup> J.P. PARRY, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 293.

<sup>12</sup> E. ROYLE, *Radicals, Secularists and Republicans*, Manchester, 1980, p. 78.

of its growth by receiving John Henry Newman into full communion at Littlemore in October 1845.<sup>13</sup>

On the one hand, these Italian clergy saw England as the world's most powerful Protestant power, a visible sign of the success of freemasonry and the powers of darkness in the world; on the other, in the 1840's and 50's they saw the first signs of a Catholic revival. They were greatly encouraged by the growing numbers of Catholics in England, due to immigration from Ireland, and were especially encouraged by a few notable conversions from members of the Oxford Movement in the Church of England, which they saw as heralding a mass conversion.

Fr Barberi described what he believed was beginning in Leicestershire in a letter to his Father-General in December 1840:

He (Wiseman) explained, among other points, that wherever a Catholic priest is stationed in England at present, the Protestants around come in numbers for instruction like bees to their hive! So that, in any case apart from hereditary Catholics, a parish very soon grows up.

I observed this myself last Sunday, when I was at Grace-Dieu, Mr. Ambrose Phillips' house. On that occasion, a poor Protestant walked seven miles to hear Fr. Gentili preach! More than that, he stayed on all day in church, shivering with cold, and only a piece of bread in his pocket, for the sole purpose of trying to persuade Gentili to go and preach in his town. The poor missionary could not make him any promise as he was already fully occupied in towns and villages nearby. And be it noted that, in the town from which this Protestant came, there is not a single Catholic! Poor people to make them Catholics all they want is someone to instruct them with combined zeal and charity. Ah! if there were only many good missionaries! But the labourers are few.<sup>14</sup>

To beleaguered Italian churchmen, overwhelmed by the hostility of increasingly anti-clerical governments in their traditionally Catholic states, the prospect of a 'Second Spring' for the Church in the very heart of enemy territory provoked enormous enthusiasm for the English mission.

In England itself Catholicism was changing. The challenge of Emancipation and of massive Irish immigration during and after the famine of 1845-8, and the small but influential group of converts began to change radically the outlook of the English Catholics. Aristocratic converts like Ambrose Phillips de Lisle, were anxious to abandon the traditional 'low profile' English Catholicism, of *The Garden of the Soul* variety, in favour of revivalist preaching at street corners and the introduction of popular Italian devotions. At the instigation of these converts, the Institute of Charity

<sup>13</sup> C. LEETHAM, *Rosmini*, New York, 1982. For his interest in England and contacts with Gentili see pp. 152 *et seq.*

<sup>14</sup> D. GWYNN, *Father Luigi Gentili*, Dublin, 1951, p. 137.

(the Rosminians) and later the Passionists sent some of their most gifted members to work in England. Dr Luigi Gentili and Fr Dominic Barberi brought a completely new style of Catholic devotion and a renewed sense of mission to the English scene. They were welcomed too, by some very influential English Catholics who like Wiseman had studied at the reopened English College in Rome and who influenced even such traditional centres as Ushaw College during the presidency of Charles Newsham (1837-1863). The appointment of Nicholas Wiseman as the Cardinal Archbishop in the re-established hierarchy in 1850, and the conversion of some of the leading members of the Oxford Movement, seemed to promise the speedy return of England to the Church of Rome.

Luigi Gentili (1801-1848) was a brilliant young Roman lawyer who had learned English and fallen in love with one of the many aristocratic young English visitors to Rome. She was a ward of Bishop Baines, who refused to let her entertain his attentions.<sup>15</sup> Under the influence of the learned and saintly Antonio Rosmini-Serbati (1797-1855),<sup>16</sup> he decided to become a priest, beginning his studies at the Irish College in Rome. He was ordained and professed as a Rosminian after a period of trial at Rosmini's hands. An extraordinarily attractive and devout figure, he was invited to commence the first Rosminian mission in England. He began his work in the Western District in 1839 at Prior Park, Bishop Baines' newly founded College.<sup>17</sup> His somewhat theatrical style of retreat preaching and his infectious enthusiasm worried some of the parents but attracted vocations from among other priests on the staff, notably Frs Moses Furlong and Edmund Spencer. With their accession to the Institute of Charity, Rosmini felt it was time to recall Fr Gentili to Italy for a period of rest and renewal,

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Antonio Rosmini Serbati, born at Rovereto in the Trentino in 1797, ordained 1821, was a considerable writer on philosophical problems associated with ethics and belief; he founded the Institute of Charity, and was a counsellor of several Popes: Leo XII, Gregory XVI, who approved the Order, and Pius IX, with whom he went into exile at Gaeta in 1849. After his book *The Five Wounds of the Church* appeared in 1848, he came under suspicion of having liberal sympathies and though propositions from his works were not formally condemned, till 30 years after his death by Leo XIII, he suffered the anguish of being disowned by the Pope. He died at Stresa in 1855. See C. LEETHAM, *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> Bishop Peter Augustine Baines OSB, born in 1787, and was educated at the English Benedictine Monastery of Lamspring in Germany. He joined the newly returned Ampleforth Community, became Prior and in 1829 and was appointed Vicar Apostolic of the Western District and Bishop of Syra. In 1830 he opened Prior Park as a combined episcopal residence, school and seminary. By his rather impetuous conduct, he alienated his former confrères at Ampleforth and began a famous action in the Roman court against the Benedictines of Downside. He died in 1843 with a huge half built cathedral in Bristol, and a half ruined College at Prior Park. See J. GILLOW, *Biographical Dictionary of English Catholics*, London, 1909.



before he sent him back to take up the mission at Grace-Dieu, the home of Ambrose Phillipps<sup>18</sup> in Leicestershire. Here Gentili began a series of missions to the Protestants in the surrounding villages, an unheard of idea among the English Catholics. This was the prelude to his remarkable work of preaching retreats and popular missions in the great cities of the British Isles. He died in Dublin in 1847, a victim of the famine fever, probably caught from those to whom he ministered with such devotion. His heroism exerted a powerful influence on other young Italian missionaries.

### Laurence Gastaldi and the English Mission

Among the Rosminian missionaries of the second generation was Dr. Laurence Gastaldi (1815-1883). Born into a wealthy Turin legal family, he began his studies at the Collegio dei Nobili, and at fourteen years of age he entered the University of Turin where he studied for the priesthood while living at home. He took his Doctorate in Theology in 1836,<sup>19</sup> though his special interest was moral philosophy. He became a member of the faculty and was also part of a well known academic society (Accademia Solariana) where he discussed philosophical questions with such well known figures as Vincenzo Gioberti and many other clerics who later became important in the Italian Church, including Luigi Nazari, Archbishop of Milan.<sup>20</sup> In 1837, he was ordained priest and worked at the University, being made a Canon of the Collegiate Church of St. Laurence in 1841. He was fascinated by Rosmini's philosophical approach and increasingly looked for a deeper interior life, especially after the disappointment associated with the closing of his newspaper, *Il Conciliatore Torinese*, in 1849. In the following year, he expressed his desire to enter the Institute of Charity and entered the novitiate at Stresa in 1851.

After his novitiate he was sent to England in 1853, to teach theology to the Rosminian students at St. Marie's, Rugby. He stayed there till 1856 when he returned to Italy for some months, ostensibly, for family reasons. It would seem, however, from correspondence with Fr. Pagani, the new Superior General, that he found religious life a struggle and asked to be released from his vows in 1855.<sup>21</sup> Behind this request seemed to lie his fear

<sup>18</sup> Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle, born in 1809, converted in 1825, he went to Cambridge as a Catholic in 1827. In 1835 he welcomed the Cistercians back to England and set up their Monastery at Coalville, Leicestershire. In 1842, he brought the Rosminians to his estate at Grace-Dieu from where they began their pioneering mission work in the locality. He died in 1878. See J. GILLOW, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> G. TUNINETTI, *Lorenzo Gastaldi, 1815-1883*, Roma, 1983, vol. 1, p. 26.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110. Gastaldi wrote: "I entered the Institute of Charity with the hope I should

that his family affairs would be open to his local superior's inspection, and that he would be unable to administer the patrimony his father had left him for the rest of the family. The Superior gave him permission to return to Italy to administer these affairs for two periods, May to September 1856, and a three month period in 1857.<sup>22</sup> Yet, even with these extraordinary concessions, Gastaldi found his position as a junior member of the order very frustrating:

...it is impossible for me to continue any longer as a scholastic in the Institute... new difficulties arise in the process of time. I go back day by day towards the tail of this religious body, while the boys, who greeted me at my entrance, are advancing towards the head.<sup>23</sup>

In 1858 he became Rector of the Cardiff Mission. He seems to have been in his element there and he organised the building of what still remains the biggest Catholic Church in Cardiff, St Peter's. However, he finally returned to Turin in 1862 after a dispute with his Superior over the division of the Cardiff Mission. There he severed his ties with the Rosminians and became in turn, Bishop of Saluzzo in 1867 and Archbishop of Turin in 1871.

### **Gastaldi, Don Bosco and England**

Canon Gastaldi and Don Bosco first met at a theological examination in the year of Don Bosco's Ordination in 1841. During the oral exam, Canon Gastaldi was impressed by the candidate's nerve, not to say impudence. When Don Bosco was questioned on a particular point, which he knew nothing about (or which he did not think, according to his pious biographer Don Lemoyne, was part of the material to be examined) he was not upset, but proceeded to invent a canon of the Council of Trent with the first phrases that came into his head. 'And is that what the Council itself says?' asked Gastaldi, marvelling at such nerve. Don Bosco began to laugh so much that the learned Canon himself had to laugh as well.<sup>24</sup>

When Don Bosco had begun the Oratory at Valdocco, Canon Gastaldi used to come along with some other priests from the city to hear

find here easier and surer the way to heaven: I fear now that in consequence of the new difficulties I met with, it will be for me the path to hell. I therefore express to you the desire of being relieved of my vows."

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 105: "...Ma anche in questi intervalli è sovente invitato a predicare."

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>24</sup> G.B. LEMOYNE, *Memorie Biografiche*, San Benigno Canavese, 1898, [Hereafter MB.] 1: 515.



confessions, teach catechism and preach. Apart from these priests, lay people including ladies from some of the best families in Turin came to help Don Bosco's work for poor boys. Among the foremost of these was Signora Margarita Gastaldi, Canon Laurence's mother. She worked alongside Don Bosco's own mother supervising the boys linen and cleanliness of the house. The *Biographical Memoirs* describe her activities thus:

On Sundays she would inspect the beds, and like a general reviewing her troops, she examined the pupils one by one, to see whether they had changed their shirts and washed properly, then, after setting the soiled linen aside, she would send it to the washerwomen. She went round convents and girl's schools encouraging them to exercise their skills in needlework on the clothes of Don Bosco's poor boys.<sup>25</sup>

When Canon Laurence entered the Institute of Charity, he asked his mother to consider Don Bosco and his boys as her children in his place. In 1853, before he left for England he made a secret will dated the 22nd April in which he left Don Bosco and his successors at the Oratory of St Francis of Sales in Valdocco, the not inconsiderable sum of 70,000 lire.<sup>26</sup> During his stay in England, they corresponded and Gastaldi wrote his *Istruzione Catechistica sul Matrimonio*, which Don Bosco published in his *Catholic Readings* as part of his campaign against the introduction of Civil Marriage. Don Bosco, for his part, kept Gastaldi informed of what was happening at the Oratory, and on Italian and family affairs:

*La Signora*, your mother, whom I can call mother and mother of the sons of my house, is continually occupied working for these poor boys... she is tenderly loved by all the boys of the house... though her own cross is your brother Giovanni who no longer wants to follow her advice; and here I must resume some news which is rather late. Your brother the lawyer, last autumn went to Paris with his *fiancé*, whose name is unknown; and your mother fears that he has married her, with only a civil ceremony. Your mother showed herself somewhat offended that this course should have been taken without her knowledge; [but] for now, things have been patched up.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> G.B. LEMOYNE, *The Biographical Memoirs*, New York, 1968, [Hereafter BM.], vol. 4, p. 99.

<sup>26</sup> G. TUNINETTI, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

<sup>27</sup> Archivio Arcivescovile Torino: 14. 9. 12. Don Bosco to *Il sig. Canonico D. Lorenzo Gastaldi Dott. in Teol. dell'ist. della carità. S. Patrick's Liverpool*, p. 1: "La Signora sua madre, che posso chiamar madre mia e madre di tutti i figli della mia casa, è continuamente occupata per questi poveri giovani... ella è teneramente amata e venerata da tutti i ragazzi della casa, come ella pure li ama tutti indistintamente nel Signore, e gode abbastanza buona salute. La sua croce però sta nel fratello Giovanni, che non vuole più secondarla nè suoi consigli: e qui debbo ripigliare una notizia alquanto indietro. Il fratello l'avvocato lo scorso autunno andò a Parigi

The fact that Don Bosco was privy to the intimate details of Gastaldi's family life and could write to him about them, would be sufficient on its own, to explain Don Bosco's interest in England, but Gastaldi's role as a correspondent for the Catholic newspaper *L'Armonia*, which was read at the Oratory, meant that there was a formal link between the actual experience of the English mission and Don Bosco's Oratory. For Laurence Gastaldi the 'Second Spring' was not a remote phenomenon but a part of his everyday experience, which he shared, no doubt, with Don Bosco on his visits to the Oratory and through Signora Gastaldi.

Writing to his Provincial Fr Angelo Rinolfi,<sup>28</sup> in excellent English, after the opening of the first Catholic cemetery Chapel in Cardiff on the 15th November 1859, he described the scene with evident enthusiasm.

Last Sunday, with the permission of the bishop, we blessed, our chapel in the cemetery. The weather was fine and many persons were present, perhaps 1200. We went in procession around the chapel outside, singing the *Miserere*, then we entered to say the Litany of the Saints. Then, from a platform outside, I addressed the Congregation and in the end, all went on their knees in the grass and said a third part of the rosary for the dead. The sight of so many people kneeling and praying devoutly was beautiful and unusual to Protestants. Everything went on orderly and a collection of £.5 was made, for the expenses of the altar of the Chapel, which scarcely covers them.<sup>29</sup>

Gastaldi's vision of the cosmic forces at work, even at this pious scene, is confirmed later in the same letter:

But the devil minded to also have his part. The chapel being small, I, in order to prevent mischief, which infallibly would have occurred, if such a large assembly had been allowed to rush into the sacred building, forbade them to come much farther than the doors, that they all might

con una Fidanzata, il cui nome è ignoto; e sua madre teme che l'abbia sposata con solo matrimonio civile. La madre si mostra alquanto offesa di tal cosafatta a sua insaputa; per allora la cosa fu rappatumata..."

[My thanks are due to Don Aldo Giraudo SDB for his transcription of this letter of Don Bosco from the Archdiocesan archive which is only partly quoted in Tuninetti's life but also shows Don Bosco's disapproval of the Law of Suppression which had already passed the elected Chamber but which he hoped would not pass the Senate. In the letter Don Bosco also gave details of the numbers of boarders in the Oratory as 98 with himself and another priest and ten clerics (students for the priesthood) chosen from the boarders. He also gave news of his financial situation and of the progress of the *Letture Cattoliche* of which there were 12,000 Italian readers and 5,000 French.]

<sup>28</sup> Fr Angelo Rinolfi: "was a former student of the seminary of Novara... from Prato Sesia... He was an ardent missionary and proponent of the English mission." *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>29</sup> English Rosminian Archive, Derryswood, Guildford. (hereafter Derryswood) Cardiff File. Gastaldi to Fr Provincial: (Nov. 15, 1859).

see the altar, [and] placed some persons to take care of the door. The Catholics were obedient and kept outside, but a Protestant, in spite of my remonstrating with him, came in. The Irishmen were provoked by this insult he offered to me... but for Mr. Gibson, who for an hour guarded him, he would have been pulled to pieces. The Mayor was present and in order to compel him to make some reparation for the disturbance he caused, [the mayor] has summoned him to appear tomorrow.

Traditional Italian devotions were the focus of the renewed devotional life of the Catholic revival. In another letter he described some of them:

We had a grand day on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the Church was full at High Mass and still more at Benediction in the evening. We erected, that day, the Confraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We shall have the Novena of Christmas with Benediction every night. Sunday next, Fr Richardson will preach in our church, to establish the Association for the Suppression of Drunkenness, I hope he will succeed.<sup>30</sup>

Ecumenism was certainly not on the agenda in that age of the Catholic revival, as can be seen in a reference to Durham, where his Provincial was preaching:

I hope St Cuthbert will help you, that you may destroy the Kingdom raised by Satan, where once there was the holiest shrine of this country.<sup>31</sup>

In his dealings with the difficult problem of mixed marriages, he showed a degree of intransigence, which marked his pastoral style later on as Archbishop of Turin, in dealing with Don Bosco himself.

Tell Fr Signini that Mr. Hemmingway, the elder, married yesterday, a Protestant girl, in the established Church. He had never said a word to any of the priests and after having made all the arrangements he might, with the parson the day before, came to us expressing his wish to marry in the Catholic Church... His brother came with him to the house of Satan and I am afraid both will turn Protestants or Infidels.<sup>32</sup>

When Gastaldi had completed his enormous church in Cardiff, at the cost of L.4250. he was displaced as Rector and took it very hard.

Fr Signini, then, is in Cardiff to fill my place, may he do more and ten

<sup>30</sup> Derryswood, Cardiff File: Gastaldi to Fr Provincial: (Dec. 12, 1859).

<sup>31</sup> Derryswood, Cardiff File: Gastaldi to Fr Provincial: (Nov. 10, 1859).

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

times more than I did. But it is hard to think of my exertions for Cardiff and of the manner in which they were rewarded by man... I fear England is no longer the fold where I have to work. Too many disappointments have surrounded me. Until now, I thought Cardiff was the place where I had to finish my days in this mortal career. Abruptly I was cut off... From tutor, I was made a pupil and my tutor tried me in a very rude and inconsiderate manner. May God forgive him and may he not have to regret the consequences...<sup>33</sup>

### **Gastaldi and Dominic Savio's day dream**

The influence of Laurence Gastaldi upon the Oratory in Turin is perhaps, best illustrated by reference to a day dream or distraction which came to one of Don Bosco's most gifted pupils, St Dominic Savio (1843-1857, canonised 1956). Dominic had come to the Oratory in Turin in 1854 hoping to train for the priesthood. He had begun his classical studies at Professor Bonzanino's school, but his life was marked by a special degree of piety, and Don Bosco's mother remarked on the trance like moments of prayer that seemed to absorb the boy after Communion. Whether through the influence of Gastaldi's reports in *L'Armonia*, or of his correspondence with Don Bosco, or of Signora Gastaldi, Dominic Savio seems to have developed an early enthusiasm for the English mission. In 1855 he was heard to remark,

So many souls need our help in England, if only I were strong enough and good enough, I'd go there now and do my utmost by word and example to lead people to God.<sup>34</sup>

Don Bosco had undoubtedly fostered this missionary desire in the boy because he feared that Dominic's desire for holiness through practising physical penance might get the better of a balanced judgement. He counselled, therefore, an active apostolic work to win the hearts of his companions for God.

During 1857 Dominic often remarked that if he could see Pope Pius IX he had something very important to tell him. When eventually Don Bosco enquired as to what this message was, Dominic replied:

...I would tell him, that in the midst of all the troubles awaiting him, he should continue his special care for England. God is preparing a great triumph for the Catholic Church there.

When Don Bosco asked how he knew, Dominic replied,

<sup>33</sup> Derryswood, Cardiff File. Gastaldi to Fr Provincial: (July 10, 1862).

<sup>34</sup> BM. 5: 207.

One morning as I was praying after Communion, a strong distraction overcame me, I thought I saw an endless plain, crowded with people, blanketed in heavy fog. They kept blundering about as if they had lost their way and no longer knew where to turn. 'This is England', someone told me. I was just about to ask some questions, when I saw Pius IX, just as I have seen him in pictures, majestically dressed, bearing a bright torch in his hands, he strode towards that immense throng. As he approached, the fog yielded to the light of his torch, and the people seemed to bask in the daylight. 'This torch,' the same voice said, 'is the Catholic Faith which must bring light to the English people'.<sup>35</sup>

Dominic died on the 9th March 1857, but his dream was chronicled in Don Bosco's life of the boy and has become the traditional reference point for the start of the Salesian work in England.

Looking for literary origins for a dream sequence might seem a forlorn task, except that Gastaldi was a regular retreat preacher at the Oratory, both in the years before he became a Rosminian and again when he finally returned from England in 1863. In fact, the conference notes made of that retreat have survived and these show certain very interesting resemblances to Dominic's day dream.

In the first Meditation, preached during the Oratory retreat in 1863, Gastaldi said:

There was once a traveller who was making a journey. He was dressed in travelling clothes, several people asked him where he wanted to go and he replied: 'I do not know'. This is an image of the men of our world who are all travelling but do not know where they are going. But, of course, all know that they are travelling towards eternity...<sup>36</sup>

In another conference, on Monday evening, he said:

We have all had the grace of having received the Faith, while so many millions are without it. And what would have become of us if we had been born as Jews of heretics, Protestants, schismatics or heretics? We would have been deprived of that gift which leads to Paradise, without which no one can be saved. In India, in China, in Japan, there are millions of people that are deprived of this gift...<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> BM. 5: 134.

<sup>36</sup> ASC. 654: A4: "Esercizi Spirituali Anno 1863, Meditazioni ed Istruzioni del Teologo Gastaldi ai 20 Gennaio. Eravi un viaggiatore che aveva da fare un viaggio. Vestito da viaggiatore se ne parte. Alcune persone gli domandarono dove voleva andare, ed egli rispondeva non lo so. Questa è l'immagine degli uomini della terra, i quali tutti viaggiano e non sanno dove che si vadano. Ma però, tutti sanno che viaggiano per giungere all'eternità."

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 654. A11, A12: "Lunedì a sera. Noi tutti abbiamo avuto la grazia d'aver ricevuto la fede, mentre tanti miglioni di persone ne sono prive. E che sarebbe di noi se fossimo nati ebraichi, eretici, protestanti, scismatici o eretici? Noi saremmo privi di quel dono che

...To be able to keep this Holy Faith, then, we should have a great respect for the Supreme Pontiff, who is like God on earth. He is the successor of Saint Peter, ultimately, it is he who holds the keys to the gates of heaven...<sup>38</sup>

The ideas in Dominic's day dream show an uncanny similarity to those found in Gastaldi's conferences, admittedly written later. Perhaps it is not too far fetched to suggest that Gastaldi may have preached a similar set of meditations while Dominic was at the Oratory in 1856 or 1857 and while he himself was on leave in Turin from England.

The full blown Ultramontane views evident both in Gastaldi's conference and Dominic's dream, did not, in the 1850s represent the traditional view of the University of Turin, where Gastaldi was educated. There, a rather more Gallican view of Papal authority called Jurisdictionalism was taught, which stressed the power of the local bishops. Gastaldi himself may well have absorbed his rather more Papalist views as a reaction to the prevailing anticlerical atmosphere of Turin, where both civil marriage, and the Law of Suppression of religious communities had been introduced. These measures showed many Catholics the danger of compromising with Liberalism or Nationalism. This may have convinced Gastaldi that the traditional Piedmontese position of moderate Gallicanism was now outmoded and that the line taken by Rosmini in his instructions for the training of his own students, from which Gastaldi taught during his Novitiate, was more appropriate. During the Vatican Council that followed he seemed to come under the influence of Bishop Dupanloup and the Inopportunist, although by the end of the Council, after a Papal interview, he voted for the Definition of Papal Infallibility and had appealed personally to the other Piedmontese prelates, to accept the decision of the Council.<sup>39</sup> In 1871 he was appointed as Archbishop of Turin.

In his new position as Don Bosco's local Ordinary, their friendship came under great strain. He had no desire to see Don Bosco and his work become anything more than a diocesan organisation under his own jurisdiction. He increasingly disapproved of Don Bosco's appeal to papal protection for his new congregation. Matters reached such an impasse, that in September 1875, Don Bosco was suspended from hearing confessions by his former friend. It was only after the Archbishop's death in 1883 that the

conduce al paradiso, senza del quale nessuno si può salvare. Nelle Indie, nella China, nel Giappone si trovano milioni di uomini che ne son privi di questo dono..."

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 654. B1: "Per poter poi conservare la Santa Fede conviene che si abbia un grande rispetto al Sommo Pontefice, egli è come il Dio in terra. Egli è il successore di San Pietro, infine, egli è colui che tiene le chiavi delle porte del cielo."

<sup>39</sup> G. TUNINETTI, *op. cit.*, p. 129ff for a discussion of his ecclesiology, and p. 189ff for his activities during the Vatican Council.

Salesian Society was finally established by being granted the privilege of presenting candidates for ordination in perpetuity, rather than for a limited period.

Despite this painful later conflict, it seems reasonable to suggest that the Salesians' coming to England can be attributed, at least in part, to the influence of Laurence Gastaldi.





## THE VISION THROUGH IRISH EYES

Since this was a new venture, we must expect to encounter many difficulties...  
(St. John Bosco)

### Don Bosco, the Irish College and the Missionary Venture

One of the most unusual features of the Salesians' foundation in England is that, unlike the other Italian missionary orders, they were able to commence their work in England with a group that included two men who were native to the British Isles. In many ways responsibility for the beginning of this work and certainly for the recruiting of the first English speaking Salesians, lies with one of Don Bosco's great friends in Rome, Archbishop Tobias Kirby, (1803-1895),<sup>1</sup> Rector of the Irish College and one of the most influential curialists of his age.

He began his Roman career by serving as Vice-Rector of the Irish College under Monsignor (later Cardinal) Paul Cullen,<sup>2</sup> between 1836-47. Cullen then, appointed him as Rector of the Irish College and as the agent of the Irish Bishops in Rome, offices which he continued to hold for nearly half a century. The Irish College formed part of the Seminary of *Propaganda Fide* [the Congregation that dealt with so called Missionary countries]. As well as preparing priests for the Irish Bishops, it also trained young Irishmen for the dioceses of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States, and even South Africa. Gradually, as a consequence of

<sup>1</sup> Tobias Kirby was born at Tallow, in the diocese of Waterford, 1st Jan. 1803, and ordained in Rome, 1833. He became a Doctor of Theology and Vice-Rector of the Irish College, Rome, in 1835. He was made a domestic Prelate in 1878, consecrated titular Bishop of Leten in 1881, and promoted Archbishop of Ephesus in 1886, and died on 20th January 1895. See *Hierarchia Catholica*, Vol. VIII, 1846-1903, Padova, 1978.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Cullen, was born in Ballitore, Co. Kildare, 29th April, 1803, he died in Dublin 1878. He was educated at a Quaker School and Carlow College. He went to Propaganda College in Rome in 1820, was ordained in 1829, and became Professor of Sacred Scripture and Hebrew there. In 1832, he was appointed Rector of the Irish College and acted as Procurator for the Irish and Australian Bishops till 1850. In 1849, as Rector of Propaganda, he prevented the destruction of the Archives of Propaganda during the Roman Republic by obtaining the intervention of the U.S. Consul. He was appointed Archbishop of Armagh in 1850, and was transferred to Dublin in 1852. As Apostolic Delegate to Ireland, he summoned the first National Council since the Reformation, the Synod of Thurles, in 1850. His fear of Revolution and his determination to bring the Irish Church into the Roman mould shaped his ecclesiastical and political policies. See *Hierarchia Catholica*, vol. VIII, Padova, 1978.

the Roman policy of centralized training, the Irish College became the Seminary that prepared the new bishops required for the churches of the Irish 'diaspora'. Kirby, therefore, gradually became an adviser to the Congregation of Propaganda when it came to appoint Bishops. He was not only Cullen's agent in Rome but also acted for the Irish bishops who began to dominate the hierarchies of the English speaking world. It was not long before they began to attribute their appointments to his undoubted influence with Propaganda. From the extent of his correspondence (the index of which occupies ten folio volumes), and the depth of regard for his influence evident there, it is reasonable to conclude that Kirby was not so much the passive instrument as the intelligent agent and originator of the so-called 'Cullenisation' of the Church in the British Empire and the United States.

When Don Bosco began the task of obtaining for his Salesians the approval of their Rule of Life in the late 1860's, it is not at all surprising that he should have become acquainted with this well known 'Vaticanista'. As was so often the case with Don Bosco, his first contact seems to have come when Mgr Kirby made an offering, no doubt solicited by Don Bosco himself, for the building of the Basilica of Our Lady Help of Christians, at Valdocco in Turin. He received a note of thanks in Don Bosco's own hand in 1867.<sup>3</sup> As an interesting dinner guest, Don Bosco could use Mgr. Kirby's invitations to the Irish College as his opportunity to meet influential figures in the Curia and also the up-and-coming members of the episcopate both from Ireland and abroad. By 1873<sup>4</sup> Kirby was distributing appeals and circulars for Don Bosco among his many friends. In 1874 one of Kirby's most successful protégés, John Joseph Lynch, Archbishop of Toronto, wrote to thank him for the visit he had arranged for him to Don Bosco's house in Turin:

I regard it as a great favour to have seen such a prodigy... we departed leaving a note in the hands of the President of Don Bosco's establishment, for him, ...My dear Lord, take the most delightful vacation of your whole life, go to the establishment of Don Bosco, then Lourdes...<sup>5</sup>

The oratory in Turin had obviously, by this time, become something of a 'holy place'.

The first hint that Don Bosco and Mgr. Kirby had a joint venture

<sup>3</sup> Don Bosco to Kirby, 9th June, 1867, Archivio Collegio Irlandese, Roma, Kirby Papers. (henceforth ACI.KP).

<sup>4</sup> ACI.KP., number 104, 1873.

<sup>5</sup> ACI.KP., 22nd Feb. 1874.

underway came in that same year, though the story has to be gleaned from various scraps of correspondence. In a letter to Kirby from Bishop E. Butler of Limerick,<sup>6</sup> nominating four students for the College, the bishop informed Kirby that 'Frs. Hallinan and Liston are on holiday in Ireland, previous to going to Don Bosco.' Kirby had, presumably, encouraged not only his episcopal protégés but also his students to break their journeys home with Don Bosco at Turin. These two it would seem had decided to stay.

They wrote to Kirby themselves in September, explaining that they had received no reply from Don Bosco and now considered that their arrangement to take the young Irish candidates to Turin was now cancelled.

We arranged with Don Bosco to return and take with us the young volunteers provided he would defray all our expenses; we are still prepared to stand by that agreement, if Don Bosco will only send us the necessary expenses and will assure us, that all will be in readiness to receive the young men, who have confided themselves to us.<sup>7</sup>

The problem then seems to have been one of money. Since Don Bosco did not have the money, as he explained later to Kirby, he did not reply, and even with Kirby's offering of £.20, the two young priests seem to have been frightened off.

Don Bosco went on to explain that he had written to the two young priests about the conditions they required for their students in the most favourable way possible. But he admitted that he was not sure that he could accept their demands for improved domestic conditions because as missionaries they would have to accept, *una vita di continua abnegazione*. He, further admitted that he was

...anxious for their students to become Salesians, but only so that they could go to the foreign missions where the English language was asked for.

Further while he recognised that these proposed pupils would not now come, still, 'I have another proposal for the other part of Ireland'.<sup>8</sup> This may well refer to the negotiations which resulted in Bishop Conroy<sup>9</sup> of

<sup>6</sup> ACLKP., 479, 1874.

<sup>7</sup> ACLKP., 517, 1874.

<sup>8</sup> ACLKP., 551, 1874.

<sup>9</sup> George Conroy (b. Dundalk, 30th Dec., 1832). He studied at the College of Propaganda and was ordained in 1857. He took his Doctorate in Philosophy and Theology and became Chaplain to Cardinal Cullen. He was consecrated Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois in 1871, nominated Apostolic Delegate for Canada in 1878 and died at St. John's Newfoundland, 4th Aug. 1878. His promotion and removal to Canada might well explain his 'abandonment' of MacKiernan. See *Hierarchia Catholica*, vol. VIII etc.

Ardagh and Clonmacnois sending Edward P. MacKiernan to the Oratory in 1876.

The two priests replied to Kirby that the conditions now proposed for the boys by Don Bosco made the whole project impossible.<sup>10</sup> There was evidently some distance between what they seem to have had in mind and what Don Bosco thought they had agreed to. This became even clearer when they finally put their position on paper for Don Bosco with a copy for Archbishop Kirby on October 20th 1874. They set out their view of the project as follows:

- (1) That the College be a College for young men who want to become secular priests for the foreign missions and whether they become members of your congregation depends totally on themselves.
- (2) That their permanent base be Valsalice...
- (3) That the young men be decently treated as to food, clothes, and other things, being from the respectable class.
- (4) That for ourselves, we want an explicit declaration that at whatever time we wish to return to our country, you will immediately give us the expenses for our journey.<sup>11</sup>

Their view seems to have been that they would help to staff a missionary training centre, much like All Hallows College in Dublin. There they hoped that young Irish students could train as diocesan priests for work overseas. They obviously objected to the apparent condition which Don Bosco seemed to have introduced that the young students must become Salesians.<sup>12</sup> They further felt that the domestic conditions at the Oratory, where students for the priesthood, and apprentices shared the same charitable institute, would never suit Irish students of the respectable class. They therefore suggested that Valsalice, a college for the education of boys of the upper classes, would suit them better. Certainly domestic arrangements at the Oratory in terms of sanitation, hygiene and food were extremely primitive. Even in the 1880's there was not one bath in the whole building for 800 boarders plus a large staff of Salesians and students for the priesthood.<sup>13</sup>

Don Bosco took a fairly philosophical view of the failure of this first attempt to bring English speaking members into the Society. He wrote to Kirby:

<sup>10</sup> ACLKP., 20th Oct. 1874.

<sup>11</sup> ACLKP., 20th Oct. 1878.

<sup>12</sup> A position that Don Bosco found himself forced into partly by the Archbishop of Turin's insistence on a clear division between diocesan clerics and members of the nascent Salesian Society, and a rigid seminary training for them all. P. STELLA, *Don Bosco, Life and Work*, vol. I, New York, 1985.

<sup>13</sup> P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella Storia Economica e Sociale, 1815-1870*. Roma, 1980, p. 27.

Since this was a new venture, we must expect to encounter many difficulties, but if it is the work of God, it will prosper according to his greater glory.<sup>14</sup>

Matthew Quinn, Bishop of Bathurst, Australia, and one of Kirby's most faithful correspondents, commented on these events later in the year,

Dr. Hallinan and Fr Liston have finally given up the Turin Project; I believe poor Don Bosco was not in a position to give security of permanence for the projected institution; besides, he required a promise from the Irish students, to become members of his congregation, which they weren't willing to give. On the whole their Bishop, Dr. Butler advised them not to go on Don Bosco's terms.<sup>15 16</sup>

Fr Liston's main concern seems to have been to extricate himself from the Turin project without offending Archbishop Kirby:

We were, indeed, apprehensive lest it may be conceived by your grace that we were in any way accessory to the breaking of our arrangement with Don Bosco. What, to our great satisfaction, we find is that you rather sympathise with us for all the useless labour we had to go to...<sup>17</sup>

Both Dr. Hallinan and Fr Liston then began their parish ministry at Ballingary, Co. Limerick and disappeared apparently from the story. In fact, however, Dr. Hallinan, subsequently became Bishop of Limerick and in 1919, welcomed the first Salesians to Ireland to begin their work in his diocese.

### The subsequent success of the Irish Connection

But this attempt to bring Irish students to the Oratory was only postponed and not abandoned. In fact, it was revived in 1876 when the first Irish student, Edward Patrick McKiernan entered the Oratory on the 14th of June. He came from the village of Scrabby, Co. Cavan and had been born on the 10 November 1860.<sup>18</sup> According to a slightly later

<sup>14</sup> ACI.KL., 586, 1874: "Essendo questa, una impresa nuova, dobbiamo andare incontro a molte difficoltà, ma s'è l'opera di Dio procederà secondo la sua maggior gloria".

<sup>15</sup> ACI.KL., 706, 1874.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew Quinn, (b. Dublin, 3 April, 1820). He began his studies at the College of Propaganda in 1837. As a member of the Irish College, he took his Doctorate in Theology in 1839. For six years he was Vicar General of the diocese of Hyderabad and in 1852 returned to Ireland where he became vice-President of the Seminary of St. Laurence's Dublin, and President from 1859. In 1865, he was consecrated Bishop of Bathurst, Australia by Cardinal Cullen. *Hierarchia Catholica*, vol. VIII, p. 106.

<sup>17</sup> ACI.KL., 710, 1874.

<sup>18</sup> *Bollettino Salesiano*, Torino, 1889, March, 1889, p. 38.

contemporary at the Oratory, he had been sent as a student for the priesthood by Bishop Conway of Ardagh, who died shortly after he arrived, and being an orphan, he became dependent on Don Bosco's charity. He was professed as a Salesian and was there to welcome the first large group of Irish students who were sent to the Oratory in 1882.

Archbishop John Joseph Lynch, a pioneering bishop of Toronto who built up his diocese into a Province, sponsored this later revival in 1882 of the earlier Kirby-Don Bosco Missionary venture.<sup>19</sup> However he soon encountered similar difficulties to those of 1874, and his comments to Don Bosco do indeed throw some more light on the earlier situation.

I regret very much the misunderstanding that has arisen concerning the students that you had the goodness to invite me to send from Ireland to your College in Turin. I will detail in a few words how I understood the invitation. Knowing how much your charity has done for boys in general and for poor ecclesiastical students, in particular, in Italy and France, I thought that you might do the same for Irish students, and hearing from Mr. MacKiernan that you desire very much to have some members of your community from Ireland, in order to enable you to establish houses of your order in English speaking countries, to which you were invited, you asked me to send ten from Ireland and that these would be educated either for your community, if they desired to enter it, or for any other, or to return to their own country, or to go to any foreign mission. This proposal appeared to me to be very generous and good — there was no question of money or pension and I thought that the coming of students from Ireland to your college would throw them into the proximate occasion of joining your order — a thing which would certainly take place and which would compensate in a certain way for others who would not become members of your order. Under these impressions, I selected a few young men in Ireland who would be ready to commence philosophy and would shorten their course.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> John Joseph Lynch, b. 16th Feb. 1806 at Townland Co. Antrim, diocese of Clogher. He studied at Maynooth College, and entered the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) in 1839 at Paris. He was professed in 1841 and ordained in 1843. He first of all worked on the mission in Ireland, then Texas and New York. He was consecrated as Auxiliary Bishop of Toronto in 1859 and succeeded to the see in 1860. He was made Archbishop Metropolitan in 1870 and died in 1888. See *Hierarchia Catholica*, vol. VIII, p. 256.

<sup>20</sup> ASC 1541 Bosco B9. Archbishop Lynch continued his letter: "To my great surprise, on my return to Canada, I was informed by Mr. McKiernan that a pension of frs. 500 would be charged for students who would not join your order, and frs. 300, during the Novitiate, for those who would. Had I known this, I certainly would not have undertaken, at my own expense, the task of selecting postulants for your order under these conditions and students for your college. The task would be too perilous and onerous both to myself and to the young men and their friends. Subsequently I got a letter from Mr. McKiernan in which he stated that the money difficulty had been overcome and that I might inform the Bishop of Ossory, Dr. Moran of it that he might send the boys that he had prepared to make up the ten. This I did not do as



Thus, we can see that the same questions of status (whether they became Salesians or not) and money (who would pay for their education) arose once again in 1882, with the actual arrival of a group of Irish students at the Oratory.

The apparent confusion about the status of the ecclesiastical students, who lived at the Oratory might seem strange to subsequent generations accustomed to thinking of the now familiar rigid distinctions between diocesan and religious students, each in their own completely separate seminary systems. However, within the archdiocese of Turin, quite a large proportion of the diocesan students either lived at home, or boarded in groups at one of Turin's great religious institutions, e.g. the Cottolengo Hospital for Incurables. They attended their lectures at the Theology Faculty of the University or the Seminary but lived and worshipped outside the seminary itself.

Archbishop Fransoni's closing of the diocesan seminary in 1848 had allowed Don Bosco to commence the work of looking after poor youngsters with the help of some diocesan seminarians who came to stay with him. He remained very unwilling to begin a traditional style religious order, partly because of the dangers of suppression by the State, and partly because he seems to have envisaged his 'Salesians' coming from all walks of life. He thought that priests and lay people, single and married could share in his work for the young and live both within and outside his own particular institutions. His desire for flexibility encouraged him to believe that ecclesiastical students could remain with him as long as they wished and then, if they so desired, return to the diocese. He tried to build this flexibility into the Society at the beginning by binding the members only with a simple promise, then reluctantly with temporary vows which he could dispense himself. But neither of these situations could guarantee him the right to present candidates for ordination by his own dimissorial letters, so Don Bosco was gradually forced to adopt a scheme whereby all the members had to take perpetual vows before they could be ordained.

A contemporary critic of Don Bosco reported to Rome in 1868 on the situation of the clerics trained at the Oratory thus:

I was afraid that there might be still some difficulty. This is a cross like many others that you have yourself received as I read in your life by Dr Charles D'Espinay. Now I cannot in honour or justice desert these young men who have confided in my words and promises, provided their conduct has been all right at Turin. I shall beg the means to pay their way in a college whilst they read their philosophy this year. Then I will send three of them to Genoa, to the College of Brignoli and the others to All Hallows College in Ireland. I will write immediately to Ireland to have them received at once at All Hallows. In the meantime let them study Italian with you. Fearing that the College of All Hallows may be filled upon second thoughts, I write to the Archbishop of Turin to receive such of the young men as may be considered worthy as I do not wish to abandon these young Irish exiles in a foreign land".

I happened to visit the Institute several times during recreation and I must confess that I was very painfully shocked to see young clerics playing with apprentice tailors, carpenters and cobblers and even exchanging playful slaps with little clerical decorum. Our Good Don Bosco is satisfied with his clerics devout demeanour in church and has little interest in forming them to a genuine ecclesiastical spirit and to a consciousness of the dignity of the life they wish to enter.<sup>21</sup>

Don Bosco, on the contrary seems to have believed that the trust and confidence built up between boys and clerics not only provided a fundamental basis for human education but provided the clerics with the best form of pastoral training available. He did all in his power to avoid too rigid a distinction either between diocesan clerics and professed Salesians or indeed between students for the priesthood and his poor apprentices.

During the episcopate of Archbishop Gastaldi who reorganised the seminary and ended the custom of having external students at the seminary, Don Bosco was forced more and more to distinguish his clerics and provide them with a seminary of their own, completely separate from the active work among the boys, which he so much believed in.

Hence, one can understand the pressures which forced Don Bosco to insist that the Irish students decide to become Salesians at the beginning of their studies.

### The Donnellan letters (\*)

#### *First impressions*

The account I heard of the Italians at home was a good one but now I am convinced that they are the dirtiest, laziest, most envious people in

<sup>21</sup> Report to the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, Turin, Aug. 6, 1868. ASC.023. Quoted in P. STELLA, *Don Bosco, Vol. I. Vita e opere*, p. 150.

(\*) **The Donnellan Letters — an excursus.** This Collection of letters were given to the Salesians by the Donnellan family, to whom most of them are addressed. There are a group of eight letters addressed to Francis and his brother James from school friends which predate the main part of the collection and are of little interest.

The main collection consists of a group of about fifty letters addressed for the most part to his parents or his sister Ellen, at Achnacloy, Co. Monaghan, dating from 1st August 1882 - 14th August 1885.

Francis Donnellan shows himself to be an intelligent and interesting correspondent, not just because of his vivid descriptions of the Italian way of life as he saw it, but also because of his interest in contemporary politics, both Irish and Italian. This interest was not approved of by his Italian superiors, dependent as it was, on reading newspapers, and later on the newspaper cuttings which he had sent from Ireland. He was far from accepting uncritically the situation that he found himself in, and never once mentioned in his letters formally joining the Salesians by taking vows. According to the *Elenco Generale della Società di San Francesco di*



the world, about their dirt, I think, I will not be able to tell you...<sup>22</sup>

Thus Francis Donnellan, with all the sharpness of youthful intolerance, saw and reported on his early impressions of Turin soon after he arrived there in August 1882. He continued:

They have privies attached to every window in the house and the smell of these going through the house knocks us out of our senses. Then, when we go to bed, we are completely eaten with bugs and fleas, though I never feel them at all, I only see their marks in the morning, and the other night, Cleary was nearly eaten with bugs and had to get up and light the gas to keep them off from him; and the place we are in at present is not half so bad as other places in Italy, in the South; the people have to wear masks going to go [to bed], lest they might be mutilated with vermin before they could rise.

His vivid descriptive style brings out very well one of the inconveniences of life in Don Bosco's Oratory in the 1880's. To the young Irish students, accustomed to the lifestyle of Irish junior seminaries of the time, the standard of hygiene among the Italian poor with its lack of sanitation, laundry, or bathing facilities was a major cause of discomfort and comment. Even though public baths were introduced to the city of Turin between 1850-70, bathing was seen as a dangerous occasion of sin by Don Bosco who warned his boys against swimming in rivers in his *Regulations for Festive Oratories*.<sup>23</sup> During a cholera scare in the 1850's a

*Sales* (Torino, 1884) he was registered as an *Ascritto* (novice) in 1883 and took his perpetual vows in 1884. His companions acted similarly: Patrick (Joseph) Diamond took Triennial vows in 1884, Patrick O'Grady, perpetual vows in the same year, as did Bernard Redahan.

This omission might be the result of a missing letter, or perhaps, more likely, a result of his ultimate desire to return to Ireland as a diocesan priest. Given the situation at the Oratory, where permanent recognition of the Salesian Society by Rome was only achieved in June 1884, hard and fast distinctions between diocesan and religious were probably not all that clearly in evidence. This may also be part of the explanation for his frequent requests for sums of money from home to buy books and other little comforts, a practice forbidden by the rule of the Salesians, yet common in diocesan seminaries.

These letters, though they only mention Don Bosco twice by name and are mainly concerned with Donnellan's personal story and reactions, still represent the earliest first-hand account of the encounter between the Salesian Society of Don Bosco's days and its first adherents from the British Isles. They will, therefore, always remain a most important source for the history of the Salesians in these islands.

They came into the possession of the Salesians during the late 1930's when the Donnellan family rediscovered them in an old chest of drawers that had been relegated to a loft and which they were clearing out. The family decided to send them to the editor of the *Help of Christians*, the Salesian Magazine, Fr John Sexton, who published part of the letters during the post-war period. From him they were passed on to the Salesian Provincial Office in England.

<sup>22</sup> SDB.GB. The Donnellan Letters (Hereafter = DL) 26. Aug. 1882.

<sup>23</sup> P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale* (Roma, 1980), p. 228. (See also P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol. II, p. 251 note [80].)

public health commission had visited the Oratory and found in mid-August that the latrines gave off such a fetid stench, that it was impossible to approach them. Describing the sanitary arrangements in 1866-1868 Fr Lemoyne, perhaps nettled by the criticisms of the Oratory's lack of facilities, wrote:

The Hospice [the boarders' section] was not a palace for Lords, but an abode of the poor, nevertheless, in building it, Don Bosco took prudent precautions to maintain cleanliness and hygiene. On the north, a long narrow courtyard separated the block of city houses from a line of low constructions, for the stables, washplace, wood store, and rubbish tip. There, indeed, were erected, at a convenient distance from one another, three towers for relieving oneself, to which there was access by open walkways to every floor. That was what we called the country part of the Oratory, which being in the open country had the advantage from every side of free ventilation.<sup>24</sup>

Stella comments that,

...different customs connected with hygiene [still persisted], such as clothing, paliasses (fouled straw being a major source of infection, as every boy was expected to bring his own, filled with straw, from home), the arrangements for latrines, and the laundry. They were all signs of a society of poor people that was stirring and organising itself, still living out the connection between country and town, within the still fairly wide confines allowed by the liberal outlook of the political ruling class.<sup>25</sup>

Donnellan had left Ireland on the first of August 1882<sup>26</sup> having travelled down to Dublin from his home at Auchnacloy in Monaghan that day. He wrote to his sister Ellen and enthusiastically described his moonlit passage across the Irish sea, inevitably a somewhat unpleasant experience for those of his companions who felt sea-sick.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228. (See MB. VIII 185s): "L'Ospizio non era un palazzo di signori, sibbene una dimora di poverelli, benchè nell'edificarlo don Bosco avesse preso prudenti precauzioni per la pulizia e l'igiene. Al nord un lungo e stretto cortile separava il caseggiato civile da una fila di basse costruzioni per le stalle, il lavatoio, la legnaia e il deposito delle spazzature. Quivi pure si innalzavano a conveniente distanza l'una dall'altra tre torri per gli agiamenti ai quali davano passaggio lunghi ballatoi ad ogni piano. Era quella, diremmo la parte rustica dell'Oratorio, il quale però, essendo in piena campagna, aveva da ogni parte il beneficio di una libera ventilazione".

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229: "Usi vari connessi all'igiene, come il vestito, il saccone per dormire, l'impianto delle latrine, la lavanderia erano tutti segni di una società di poveri che si muoveva e si organizzava vivendo il rapporto tra città e campagna, nei margini abbastanza larghi ancora lasciati dalla mentalità liberale della classe politica dirigente".

<sup>26</sup> Donnellan's first letter to his sister Ellen, though written from Dublin was not posted until he arrived in Italy. It bears the date 1881, but since all the subsequent letters are dated 1882, it would seem he made an obvious error.

With his five companions, (Redahan joined them a week late having mistaken the date) they set off for Paris, that night and spent the next day viewing what he calls, in typically Northern Ireland Catholic terminology, 'the chapels of France' (churches being a word restricted to the Church of Ireland buildings).

They are very large, so much so that Monaghan Cathedral would not make the start of an altar in any of them.

We arrived at Turin at half past six on Saturday evening and proceeded from the station through Turin city where the people were staring at us, as the Irish would at a circus... though, indeed, they showed us some respect too, because they took off their hats to us. On our arrival at the 'Dom(sic) Bosco College', we were not long waiting until we met the Rev. Mr MacKiernan, an Irishman being born in the Co. Cavan; he is here now 7 years, being only 14 years of age when he came first; he received us as an Irishman should do, gave us a very cordial shake of the hand, and showed us through the whole College.

Edward Patrick MacKiernan was the first Irish Salesian and he held quite important offices at the Oratory being successively assistant prefect, and after his ordination on the 29th March 1884, Prefect at the Oratory, charged with managing domestic arrangements and providing materially for almost a thousand people. He was appointed to lead the English Mission to Battersea in 1887 and carried out his responsibility with great devotion.<sup>27</sup> Throughout Donnellan's letters McKiernan appears as the one person who supported and sustained the young Donnellan as he faced the problems of settling down in a foreign country and the difficulties that involved. Donnellan recorded with some surprise, that MacKiernan had felt so homesick at first, that he cried himself to sleep. McKiernan's experience of being 'abandoned in a foreign country', especially after the death of Bishop Conroy of Ardagh, who had sent him out to the Oratory, made common ground between himself and the newcomers, who soon felt themselves abandoned by Archbishop Lynch. At McKiernan's ordination, on the Saturday after St. Patrick's day, 1884, he was assisted by Donnellan and Redahan, another of the newcomers, acting as Acolytes.<sup>28</sup>

Other accounts of the initial experience of these Irish aspirants all date from much later reminiscences mostly written down on the occasion or after the deaths of Frs Diamond and Redahan and O'Grady and kept in the archives of the Salesian San Francisco Province.

Fr. O'Grady left a typescript account of his reminiscences of Fr. Patrick Joseph Diamond on the occasion of his death. According to this (p. 1 and 2), Diamond had no intention of becoming a religious when he went

<sup>27</sup> *Bollettino Salesiano*, Anno XIII, n. 3, Marzo, 1889, Torino, 1889, p. 38.

<sup>28</sup> DL., May 1st, 1884.

to Turin on the invitation of Archbishop Lynch. According to his *curriculum vitae* as it exists in the Archive in his own hand, he

Studied in St. McCartan's Seminary, Monaghan, Co. Monaghan Ireland. Did not go to Italy to become a Salesians but to continue my studies and become a priest for the diocese of Toronto Canada under Archbishop Lynch.

Both confirm Donnellan's account though O'Grady adds some colourful details such as the Archbishop making the Lough Derg penitential pilgrimage, known as St. Patrick's purgatory with Diamond in tow (p5, p6) and tells us that Diamond was set against being a religious because he was an orphan and had four younger sisters who he hoped to be able to help from his stipend as a priest in Toronto.

O'Grady also tells us that he was appointed by the Archbishop as the party leader on their journey through England, France and Italy because he was senior in age and had already spent six years in France for his classical studies, but had returned home for motives of poor health in 1879.

O'Grady's account of how they decided to become Salesians involved his own personal interview with Don Bosco in french and suggested that both Donnellan and Diamond went to San Benigno at first only for the retreat and then returned to Turin where Diamond explained his difficulties to Don Bosco who reassured him that God would provide for his sisters and encouraged him to join the Salesians at San Benigno and Donnellan joined him. (pp 9,10) Donnellan, of course, gives no hint of such a carismatic interview in his account.

In 1873 O'Grady and Diamond both volunteered for the Missions in Argentina and went to San Nicolas los Arroyos where they taught till they were ordained, after which, in 1887, Diamond was sent as chaplain to the Falkland Islands to be succeeded by Fr. O'Grady in 1890. After various globe trotings both ended up working in the Salesian parish of Corpus Christi, San Francisco. Fr. Diamond died there in 1922 and Fr. O'Grady in 1943.

Although Fr. Redahan does not feature in Fr. O'Grady's reminiscences, perhaps because he did not go to South America but after Ordination in Italy in 1888, worked for ten years in different Italian houses before being sent to San Francisco to be parish priest at Corpus Christi and later worked at the Italian Church of St. Peter and Paul in the same city. In his mortuary letter, Fr. Manassero confirmed Donnellan's story presumably on the authority of Redahan himself, before his death on Jan 15th, 1920. His family in Ireland claim to have received from him one of Don Bosco's own walking sticks.

*Don Bosco, absent from the Oratory*

Donnellan's other first impression is of the Superiors of the Oratory:

We were received kindly by the Italians although none of them speak English, except a few words... the President was absent when we arrived, but we spoke to the Vice-President, who can speak a few words of English. We will have many good times here, only we cannot eat the meat very well as yet...<sup>29</sup>

His note on the absence of Don Bosco, the President, from the Oratory while apparently only a casual reference, marks the deeply felt, shared experience of the Salesians of those years. In the catalogue of the Society, though he was Superior General of the Salesian Society, Don Bosco remained listed and thought of himself first of all, as the Director of the Oratory. To Donnellan, however, he remained a rather distant 'saintly' figure.

The president or Superior is a very venerable man, about 65 years of age and as I am sending his photograph, you can have a view of him. He is, what I may call, a walking saint, has had many visions and met with so many hazards that it would be difficult for me to relate. The Blessed Virgin has often appeared and spoken to him.<sup>30</sup>

Don Bosco's reputation for sanctity even in his own time was well established. During his visit to France in 1883 the crowds in Avignon became so enthusiastic that they began to attack his cassock with scissors for relics.<sup>31</sup>

The task which forced him to be so often away from Turin was that of raising the money to build the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Rome at Leo XIII's personal request, as a final proof to the Curia that Don Bosco's Salesians were indeed at the service of the Church, despite the damaging conflict with Archbishop Gastaldi. Only in 1884, did Don Bosco receive the 'privileges' in perpetuity, necessary to secure the Salesians as an 'exempt' religious order.

In his absence, problems of the transition from the personal presence and authority of the Founding Father himself, to the as yet untried authority of his successor began to come to the surface. This was no doubt emphasised in an organisation which, according to Donnellan, had opened 150 colleges throughout Europe and across America and nearly the same number of Chapels,<sup>32</sup> and which had in Turin a college that accommodated nearly a thousand people.

<sup>29</sup> DL., Aug., 26th, 1882.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> T. BOSCO, *Don Bosco, una biografia nuova*, Torino, 1984, p. 404.

<sup>32</sup> DL., Aug., 26th, 1882.

Problems of the scale of such a community tended to lead almost inevitably to a more operational style of management, rather than one characterised by personal influence. Don Bosco himself complained of this change in his letter from Rome to the Oratory in 1884 (10th May). When he returned he found that 'lining up the pupils in files' had been introduced in his absence and he did not hesitate to object:

Why do the superiors move away from the observance of the rules Don Bosco has given them? Why the replacement little by little, of living and watchful 'prevention' by a system that consists in framing laws?

But the Chronicler noted unhappily, that despite his protest to Don Francesia, the Director, nothing was done.<sup>33</sup>

### *The other Irish students*

Donnellan described in some of his early letters the other members of the group who came with him from Ireland:

The first and eldest is Nolan from Co. Kerry. He is very like James McPhillips and goes on talking and pulling words out of him in the same manner; he is about 27 years of age. The next one is O'Grady, from Mayo, he is apparently like Sloane, only he is all pop-marked like Robert Murphy; he has a brother a priest in the South of Ireland and another in Maynooth.<sup>34</sup> The other is Cleary from the Seminary [St Macartan's College, Clones, Co. Monaghan]; he is a very good fellow and very attentive to me.<sup>35</sup>

The others in the group were Smyth and Diamond who are hardly mentioned except when discussing the accommodation:

There is nothing here except dormitories and it was in a small dormitory we all slept together, at first, containing six beds, the number we required, but as soon as Smyth got bad with fever, he was removed to an adjoining dormitory and on that very evening Redahan came in and occupied his bed and he was only here a day when he caught the fever. Redahan arrived a week late, having thought we were to leave Dublin a week later and he, nothing daunted by this catastrophe, started out and arrived safely.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> D. BOSCO, Letter from Rome, quoted in full: *Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St. Francis of Sales*, Roma, 1984, p. 260.

<sup>34</sup> One of O'Grady's brothers, Fr J. O'Grady PP. of Bohola, Swinford, Co. Mayo offered Don Rua a piece of land in Mayo in which to build a Missionary College in 1906. See O'Grady To Rua, 18th Sept. 1906. ASC. 3778. D11 ff.

<sup>35</sup> DL. Aug. 2nd, 1881 (2).

<sup>36</sup> DL. 26th Aug. 1882.



### *The nature of the Oratory*

Donnellan seems initially to have thought that they were going to a Seminary such as they might have found in Ireland, but after a month he had realised otherwise:

...but I must inform you this is no regular College, but a charitable institution, where the poor are educated and brought up according to the Catholic Religion — there are about 13 or 14 Superiors, all under Don Bosco, all very civil and kind.<sup>37</sup>

His description of the Oratory showed how complex an institution it was,

There are all kinds of trades worked here: shoemakers, tailors, blacksmiths, musicians etc. etc. An excellent foundry is attached to the house and their printing and bookbinding establishments are nearly the best in the whole city of Turin. They issue a monthly periodical, generally concerning the works of Don Bosco and how his establishments throughout the world are getting on.

Another characteristic of the place is noted by Donnellan and one that Don Bosco insisted on as an important part of education whether for artistic expression or merely for letting off steam, namely music.

There are a great number of musical instruments in the house; 6 or 7 pianos, accordians, flutes, harmoniums to any amount, and you may guess the pianos are plenty when we have one in our room and we are constantly at it... the Italians are nearly, if not, the greatest musicians in the world and are constantly singing or playing, so much so, that we are nearly all deafened with the continual thunder of music.<sup>38</sup>

### *The Irish grievances*

Despite the noisy pandemonium which characterised the Oratory, the Irish students were far from being totally content as Donnellan laconically remarked: '...but after all we have many grievances'. Under this general but somewhat ominous title went much of the homesickness and difficulties of adaptation, to which these young Irishmen were subject in Turin. At a deeper level, he described their growing questions about what sort of vocation they were to follow.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> DL. Sept. 2nd, 1882.

*The Italian diet*

Adapting to the Italian food was certainly one of the grievances.

The breakfast we get at eight o'clock consists of a cup of coffee and a loaf of bread, nearly as large or at any rate half the size of a bun, and you may see this breakfast is not very suitable... Then comes dinner... we usually get four plates [= It, 'piatte', plates or courses] for this meal: first is soup made up of something, we cannot tell, but I have been told the finest soup in Italy is made from frogs... but the soup is nearly the best thing we get; the second plate is generally beef, but always a small bit and none on Fridays and Saturdays for they are fast days, though here, I may call them all fast days, for that matter; we get pease and pulse all mixed in vinegar and oil; the third is onions and garlic and other red stuff mixed with some other combustible (sic) which we do not know and sometimes, instead of this, we get potatoes fried; the fourth is fruit, either pears, peaches or vines.<sup>39</sup>

Part of the difficulty then lay in limited amount of meat and the use of oil and vinegar on vegetables, but perhaps the more significant feature was the length of time between lunch and supper (from 12.00 noon till 8.00 p.m.) and the lack of a traditional bacon and eggs breakfast.

*The style of discipline*

One of the features of life at the Oratory that these young Irishmen found most difficult to accept was the opening of the students mail:

I received all the papers you sent me and likewise all the letters, particularly the one that contained the L.2, for I was very glad to see it, but unfortunately, one of the superiors opened it and showed the contents of the letters to MacKiernan who read it all but there was nothing in it that they could say anything to, and then I did not care very much. My letter was the first that was opened since we came but it would not have been opened only it was registered.<sup>40</sup>

The situation became more acute when they were moved to the house of studies at San Benigno Canavese...

As I will be compelled to give my letters open from this time forward you need not expect much news from me, and only I was in Turin, I could not have sent home so many private letters but as we are now under college rules, we cannot post any letters ourselves.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> DL. 25th Sept. 1882.

<sup>41</sup> DL. 12th Oct. 1882.



Worse was to come when a year later his post was stopped for three months without any explanation,

I was very glad to learn you received all my letters in good time and on the contrary, I suppose you will be surprised to hear, that I did not receive any of the letters or papers which you sent these last three months until the one on the 10th of August. I cannot imagine what is the cause of it; they may have arrived and weren't allowed to be given to me. Of course, you know, the College is quite contrary to journal reading and probably on that account, they were kept off me: at any rate, I don't care much about the papers, were it not for the letter which was enclosed in one of them, but I now must console myself for the loss of it by more frequent communications.<sup>42</sup>

The prevailing seminary discipline up to 1963 certainly frowned on the reading of secular newspapers by students for the priesthood, though at the Oratory, the Catholic newspaper *L'Armonia* was certainly read regularly from the 1850's. But even given the prevailing atmosphere, the confiscation of personal letters without any notice seems an unreasonable tightening of what was already a severe discipline. Despite having to hand in his letters open at San Benigno, he made no marked change either in the quality of the news or the often critical comments which he included in them. Perhaps this was because he came to realise that none of the superiors could read enough English to translate his letters. In a similar way he protested at what he regarded as an unreasonable restriction when he was not permitted to go down to Turin, to say goodbye to his friends Diamond and O'Grady who were departing for the Missions in Argentina.<sup>43</sup>

#### *Diocesan priests or Salesians?*

A much more serious grievance developed early on over the question of whether they were training to be diocesan or Salesian priests. Donnellan described the problem thus:

Now to tell you of all the catastrophes which happened here would be nearly impossible... we are continually talking over our misfortunes and holding council to see what we should do.

The problem would seem to have come to light with the advent of another Salesian called O'Connor.

We met with on Friday last a real Irishman, the name of O'Connor from Co. Longford, and only for him, we would have remained altogether in

<sup>42</sup> DL. 10th Sept. 1883.

<sup>43</sup> DL. 13th Nov. 1883.

the dark. He is in Italy two years and has come to spend his vacation with us and MacKiernan. He is very tall, red-haired and about 5 feet 10 inches. Well, when he told us we were sent out here to join the order of St. Francis of Sales, to be just the same as Christian Brothers or something like what Jemmy McConville's brothers are at. Well, when we heard this, we were very much astonished and we were ready for an open insurrection and he says he wrote to MacKiernan to tell us the truth about everything and not have us come out to Italy to be deceived in such a manner. But MacKiernan only wanted his own ends accomplished and so never told us anything at all about the affair and told us we would have the very best of times and so on. For O'Connor, he will tell us everything and plainly and he does not want us humbugged as MacKiernan would like.

O'Connor appeared serpent like to destroy the primal innocence of these Irish students.

He, is very different from MacKiernan, who is a Superior and would not like that MacKiernan would hear anything he tells us; he brings us out for a walk, every evening, to tell us the particulars of everything. He says that when we leave this place, we will have to deliver up everything, clothes, books, hats etc. etc. But this is a thing we have no notion of, and as he is in the place we are going to, he will do his best for us. But we don't intend to remain here long, as Archbishop Lynch will be compelled to pay for us in another College or bring us out to America to a College there and as we know he has plenty of money, we are not uneasy where we go.<sup>44</sup>

[According to Donnellan, O'Connor himself left the Salesians returned to Ireland in 1884.]

Archbishop John Joseph Lynch was one of the great pioneer Canadian churchmen. During his 28 years as Bishop of Toronto (1860-1888), he founded 40 new parishes, opened a new Seminary, and felt able to organise the sub-division of his diocese into three new dioceses. He became metropolitan Archbishop of the Province of Toronto during his stay in Rome at the Vatican Council. His friendship with Kirby, and his connections with Ireland, as has been seen, made him an excellent linkman for the purpose of bringing Irish students out to Turin.

These Irish students like Donnellan soon found themselves in something of a quandary. He outlined what they felt to be their options thus:

First, some of us will say we may go home again, others that we must write long letters to the Archbishop and complain of our grievances and

<sup>44</sup> DL. 26th Aug. 1883.

to bring us over immediately to America, and others will say, we may as well remain here a year, at any rate, but for myself I don't care whether we remain or go because I am getting on splendidly, only for the meat, and when one is hungry, they can eat anything that is put before them.<sup>45</sup> MacKiernan, for his part, would like us to join the order of St. Francis of Sales, of which he himself is a member. Although he is not a priest yet, but could have been long ago, had not his age prevented him; but as we left home with the intention of becoming secular priests and to go back to Ireland, if we could, or if not, to go to the Archbishop in America, we all strongly refused to join the order and kicked up a great row, and MacKiernan told us we were sent out with no other intention... We persisted so far that MacKiernan showed us a private letter which had been sent to him by the Archbishop ordering him not to attempt to make us join the order, if it was not our own wish, and saying he would send all who did not wish, to join some other college, where we would have been educated for his own diocese, and after seeing the letter, we sent one to the Archbishop to have us removed to some other college where we could study to become priests.<sup>46</sup>

The situation became more tense when two of the original group, O'Grady and Redahan moved out to the novitiate house at San Benigno Canavese. They tried to persuade the rest to join them but they refused steadfastly, till the end of September 1882, when eventually they decided to go there, at least for the retreat with which the year usually began.<sup>47</sup>

At length the Archbishop replied to their letter saying that he was preparing places for them in another college and that they need not fear, that he would not abandon them and telling them to study hard at Italian.

### *The parting of friends*

A month later, the position had changed greatly:

Since I last wrote, there have been great changes among ourselves and changes, I hope, for the better. Diamond and I are stopping at San Benigno and the other three, viz. Cleary, Smyth and Nolan are as yet stopping at Turin, until the Archbishop of Toronto finds a place for them; they will be sent... most probably to the Seminary at Turin...<sup>48</sup>

When Donnellan and Diamond joined O'Grady and Redahan at San Benigno, they found there O'Connor, whom they already knew, and a young English convert, Charles B. Macey, (who was, in fact, to be

<sup>45</sup> DL. 25th Sept. 1882. "I don't care whether we remain or go."

<sup>46</sup> DL. 2nd Sept. 1882.

<sup>47</sup> DL. 24th Sept. 1882.

<sup>48</sup> DL. 9th Nov. 1882.

MacKiernan's first companion at Battersea), while Cleary, Nolan and Smyth moved to the Archdiocesan Seminary in Turin. In the following April, Donnellan gave some news of them.

...at present, a circumstance has occurred, which I think will damp their courage. The Archbishop of Turin, under whose care they were placed by Dr. Lynch, has lately died; his death happened rather suddenly and unexpectedly, as he was about to terminate the ceremonies of Holy Week, or I think they were finished.<sup>49</sup>

### *The death of Archbishop Gastaldi*

Donnellan then began a detailed account of the death of Archbishop Gastaldi, fascinating because it differs from the official accounts published on the occasion of his funeral.<sup>50</sup>

On Saturday morning, he was preparing to say Mass but was seized by a cough, which he usually had and returned for a while to a room off the sacristy, where he sat down and told the priests who were attending him to leave for a moment. They, of course, did so, but on finding he was remaining too long inside, they determined to go and see if anything was the matter. Well, upon going in, [they] found him expiring, and immediately all the efforts possible were used to bring him to life, but in vain, for he never uttered one word...<sup>51</sup>

This account of the Archbishop's death throws an interesting light not just on the fate of Donnellan's three companions at the Turin Seminary who, lacking the patronage of the English speaking Gastaldi were moved, as Donnellan predicted to Genoa, but it also shows the interest the contemporary Salesians had in the state of relations between Don Bosco and the Archbishop.

Relations between Don Bosco and Mgr Frasoni, who had ordained him, had been excellent but he had died in exile in 1862. His immediate successor, Mgr Riccardi, had been extremely surprised to find that Don Bosco intended to develop his work outside the diocese. His intentions were declared by his application for and reception of the first papal decree of recognition (*Decretum Laudis*) of the Salesians in 1864.

Mgr Riccardi replied in 1866, by encouraging ten clerics to leave the Oratory, and return to the Seminary if they wanted to be ordained for the diocese.

On the appointment, at Don Bosco's personal request, of Bishop Laurence Gastaldi to succeed Riccardi in 1871, hopes were high for a

<sup>49</sup> DL. 17th Apr. 1883.

<sup>50</sup> ASC.615. Bosco A11 ff. and B7.

<sup>51</sup> DL. 17th Apr. 1883.

period of improved relations, but Don Bosco had not reckoned with Gastaldi's dominant and forceful personality and the united forces of Catholic reaction, to whom any apparent hint of independence, however limited, was immediately interpreted as disloyalty and betrayal. The definition of Papal Infallibility might seem to have restricted episcopal powers but in practice it seems to have almost conferred 'an aura of infallibility' on all ecclesiastical authority which as a result demanded unquestioning obedience. Archbishop Gastaldi certainly regarded his own appointment as a direct act of God:

My election was an unexpected touch of Divine Providence, to which no human favour has contributed. It was the Holy Spirit and him alone who has placed me at the head of the Turin Archdiocese.<sup>52</sup>

This seems, in fact, to be a direct denial of the suggestion that Don Bosco had had anything to do with his appointment, even though Don Bosco himself was given the unusual privilege of informing Bishop Gastaldi of the Pope's choice.

In a letter that Gastaldi wrote to Archbishop Pozzi of Mondovì in 1877, he expressed his opinions 'that *galantuomo* whom your excellency wrote to me about in your letter on the 23rd of this month'.

He is in certain ways a real sun, but like the sun he has his black spots. The spirit of autonomy and independence lives in him and he rather makes himself on a par with the bishop of the diocese and if the bishop does not allow him to act in full liberty, to speak, to publish whatever he likes, it means war. In fact if it is a question of money which you have to deal with him about then it is a bad deal, and you better give up unless you want to suffer lots of headaches. Moreover, if he starts a house in the diocese of Mondovì, the diocesan college and even the senior seminary may have to suffer even grave damage. Many of the youngsters of talent will be attracted to his Oratory and will become members of his Congregation so that by the ladle he creams of the best for himself and sends the rest to the bishop for him to put in the seminary. In this way he has gained approval of his Congregation and he has only sent me 4 or 5 individuals to receive the cassock each year from the multitude from my diocese who attend his schools and Oratories.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup> T. BOSCO, *Don Bosco, una biografia nuova* (Torino, 1984), p. 391: "Appena giunto in duomo e salito sul pulpito, mons. Gastaldi affermò con forza che 'la sua elezione era un tratto inaspettato della divina Provvidenza, al quale non aveva contribuito nessun favore umano. Era lo Spirito Santo, e solo lui che l'aveva posto a capo dell'Archidiocesi torinese'".

<sup>53</sup> Mondovì Archdiocesan Archives: Arch. vesc. di Mondovì. Mons. Pozzi, corrispondenza (ultima cartella). Il vescovo Gastaldi a Mons. Pozzi (24 Maggio 1877). This letter was discovered by Professor Franca Mellano who has researched archives in Turin for the last 30 years. She specialized in the History of the Church with a particular interest in 19th century

The conflict reached a high point when the Canonical Process against Don Bosco began in the Roman Court in 1873. In December 1881 when Leo XIII learned of the final voting of the commission in favour of Don Bosco (4-2, for Don Bosco with 2 abstentions), he decided to block any embarrassment to Archbishop Gastaldi and imposed a solution which required a humble apology and a request for pardon from Don Bosco.

### *The results of the conflict*

The conflict with Archbishop Gastaldi had other important consequences for Donnellan's experience of training. The house at San Benigno Canavese was set up in 1879, outside the Archdiocese of Turin in an old abbey, partly to avoid Gastaldi's claim that all the students in Salesian houses were merely his diocesan students, but also as a reply to the charge made against the Salesian training system that the clerics were too busy looking after common apprentices to be properly devoted to their studies for the priesthood. Don Bosco had set up San Benigno as the first Novitiate and student house under Fr Giulio Barberis. Unlike the Oratory, there would appear to have been little direct involvement with young people for these students during their studies. In fact, to justify his use of these municipal buildings, Don Bosco set part of it up as a hostel for orphans and an oratory for local boys. [As a consequence of the removal of the students to San Benigno, though, the Valdocco Oratory's spirit seems to have felt the absence these lively young students from the recreations and teaching and this may explain a hardening of the disciplinary practice.<sup>54</sup> At San Benigno, this isolation seems to have led, in its turn, to a marked concentration on examinations in the student house which would appear, on Donnellan's testimony, to have been somewhat unbalanced.

bishops. At present she teaches in a Jesuit school in Rome. She sent the letter to Fr Peter Brocardo who was kind enough to pass it on to me.

It deals with a request that Don Bosco made open a novitiate house at Mellea where there was a very beautiful ex-Franciscan foundation: "...Egli è per certi aspetti un sole, ma come il sole, ha le sue macchie. Lo spirito di autonomia e indipendenza vive in esso e assai si pone a paro al vescovo della diocesi e se il vescovo non lo lascia in libertà piena di fare, parlare, stampare quanto gli aggrada, gli muove guerra. In fatto di denaro se si ha a fare con esso, è un mal fare; e bisogna cedere se non si vogliono soffrire mali di capo. Certamente che se esso impianta una casa nella diocesi di Mondovì, il collegio vescovile ed anche il Seminario chiericale ne possono avere danno ed anche grave. Molti dei giovani di talento saranno tratti al suo Oratorio, e si faranno membri della sua Congregazione; che esso ogni anno colla mestola schiumerà per sè il meglio e manderà il rimanente al Vescovo perché lo ponga nel suo Seminario. Da che esso ha ottenuto l'approvazione della sua congregazione non mi ha mandato che 4 o 5 individui all'anno per vestirli da chierici, dei molti miei diocesani che frequentano le sue scuole, e sono nei suoi Oratori".

<sup>54</sup> See P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale*, p. 240.



From January 1883 onwards, almost every monthly letter contained references to examinations:

At present we are working hard at our books as we must always do because we have so little time to study and so many lessons to get off, so that it is nearly impossible, and we have another examination in less than a month, so you can see we have no time to be idle...

A month later he wrote:

As you understand from some of my former letters, we do have exams every two months, the last one coming off last week... and in preparing for the examination, I did not have time to answer your letters, but now as it is over, I will endeavour to answer them satisfactorily.<sup>55</sup>

So even during the holidays the students were sent up to the hill house of Lanzo far from the noisy city children, and spent their time studying and going for long walks.<sup>56</sup>

Just before the breakdown of his health in the following year, Donnellan complained of the pressure of examinations:

But what can I do, if I write long letters, I lose my study hours and everything is so arranged here that if you neglect to use well the appointed time, you are in a continual fuss for a week afterwards.<sup>57</sup>

One way out of this high-pressure atmosphere was to volunteer for the Missions in South America where, because of the small number of priests, and since the ecclesiastical authorities were less concerned to supervise training, it was much easier for students to engage in quite responsible pastoral work, as did O'Grady and Diamond when they went out to Argentina with Bishop John Cagliero in February 1884.

### *Carnival*

One of the very few really radiant topics in Donnellan's accounts of his Italian experience are his descriptions of the celebrations associated with the Carnival. During this week before Lent each year, the Salesian students tried to overcome the gap which seems to have existed between the 'clergy' and the ordinary people, in marked contrast to the clergy in the towns who attempted to suppress the celebrations which preceded Lent,

by preaching against them and by establishing on those days, the Adoration of the Holy Sacrament. [The result was, in fact, to draw

<sup>55</sup> DL. 8th Feb. 1883 and 21st March 1883.

<sup>56</sup> DL. 10th Sept. 1883.

<sup>57</sup> DL. 1st May 1884.

down on the clergy the wrath of the people.] But, of course, as generally occurs here, they are not listened to but rather despised, trampled upon, and laughed at so much during Carnival, they are obliged to remain within doors... if they venture to go out, they know their fate, which, I venture to say, is worse than that of a process server or policeman in Ireland at the present time.

The Salesian approach to Carnival seemed somewhat different.

On the last three days of the carnival we had not class, but on the contrary, celebrate the ancient rites in the most pompous manner possible, terminating each evening with the theatre. Well, I must say, to do justice to the Italians, they are most expert, dexterous and perspicacious on the stage...<sup>58</sup>

#### *Donnellan's deteriorating health*

During his first year in Italy, Donnellan found the winter very severe indeed.

When I read your letter, I envied your happiness as mine has recently been disturbed by a sudden though not a severe attack of sickness, but at present I am well as ever, again, though the weather has still a great effect upon me... and my gloves have been useless to me this last month, as my hands have been in a terrible state because of the cold, but they are nearly well again.<sup>59</sup>

Apart from suffering toothache and having problems with his eyes, nothing serious occurred until the following winter.<sup>60</sup> In a letter to his sister Ellen (10 Dec., 1883) he wrote:

I regret to say I have caught a great cold, something similar to that which I had before leaving home. It frequently attacks me during the night and therefore, leaves me some sleepless nights and as Pat used to say, puts the strings in motion, which have now been undisturbed for some length of time.<sup>61</sup>

He then, went on to explain how he had taken to wearing clogs, to keep his feet warm. During the following March, a severe cold which kept him in bed for several days was, however, the occasion of a real treat:

...during my convalescence, I had the opportunity of drinking some tea, which in reality, I must say was something more than a novelty to me, delicious, invigorating and reviving.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> DL. 5th March 1884.

<sup>59</sup> DL. 8th Feb. 1883.

<sup>60</sup> DL. i. toothache: 17th April 1883; ii. eye trouble: 15th Oct. 1883.

<sup>61</sup> DL. to Ellen: 10th Dec. 1883.

<sup>62</sup> DL. 5th March 1884.



*The critical breakdown*

The critical breakdown in his health began the following June during the final exams.

In a moment, all my designs have been unexpectedly frustrated by an accident that caused me more fear than it was serious, which occurred to me on Friday evening, June 17th and has impeded me from presenting myself at the examinations, leaving me ample time to continue my so often interrupted communications, were I permitted to occupy myself in mental labour. But since this is absolutely prohibited me, I hope you will be satisfied with these few lines for this time.<sup>63</sup>

In his next letter, he gave a more detailed account of the sickness,

...that to say the least of it, had it continued, it would, in all probability, have led to fatal consequences.

It occurred on the evening of the 27th of June just before supper when he visited the closet,

...and on going down, I felt some warm stuff coming up from my stomach and on retching the saliva, I observed it to be a reddish black colour and immediately concluded to my great astonishment that it was blood.

When he tried to go to bed, it got worse.

I had not more than covered myself with the bed clothes, when the blood commenced to issue forth with such vehemence, that it caused me to cough continually and to sit upright in bed, otherwise I would have been instantly suffocated.

He was given a plate of ice to eat which controlled the bleeding somewhat, though it went on for five days. He was then moved to the Oratory in Turin so that he could consult the specialists who visited him every day in the college,

...where I have every commodity I desire and a friend and compatriot Rev. E.P. MacKiernan who gives me every attention possible and sees to all my wants.<sup>64</sup>

In the following August he seemed to reach a depth of depression which made him extremely touchy about not receiving the L.3 he had asked for from home, and which prompted a denunciation in purple prose of all the tight-fisted and money-grabbing clerics he had ever met or heard about.

<sup>63</sup> DL. 1st July 1884.

<sup>64</sup> DL. 19th July 1884.

I often think over the happiness which it has been my destiny to enjoy and what it would have been had I been in the hands of my pseudo-benefactor, Dr. Lynch, who never paid a penny for my maintenance, but grumbled very much, because he had to spend three or four pence on letters... So you see, the greatest dignitaries in the Church are capable of being misers and of holding their hand upon the purse with the firmest grasp.

He did not only blame priests in general but, in particular,

Irish priests who look about nothing else but hoarding up immense treasures for their nephews and nieces.

For his own part, he determined when he was ordained,

to deal a death blow at the auctioning and gathering of illegitimate taxes at funerals which is nothing better than exposing and selling the corpse.

In the same letter, he added to his 'hit list',

My Lord Simony, Bishop of Clogher, who was already despised and looked down upon.<sup>65</sup>

These outbursts can perhaps be best explained as a mark of the frustration he felt at not being able to get on with his studies, and as a result of the weakening effects of what would seem to have been tuberculosis.

By September he felt somewhat better, though the doctors gave him little hope of recovery. However, in October he moved to the College at Valsalice, which Archbishop Gastaldi had entrusted to the Salesians in 1872 for the education of the upper classes. He enjoyed the lectures of a former Cabinet Minister Count Cesare Balbo, and he asked his parents to send a presentation copy of the *Imitation of Christ* for him. He found conditions at Valsalice much more comfortable with fires in nearly every room and he began to do a little teaching himself. His hopes were rekindled by this period of respite and he even thought of beginning his theological studies at Turin University, but he suffered a major setback in May spending three weeks in bed, the doctors' conclusion being, that it was his extraordinarily weak stomach that was most deeply affected by the illness.<sup>66</sup>

After a break at Alassio which he found too hot, he returned to Valsalice from where he penned his last known letter home. In it he attributed the amelioration of his condition to, "your exertions exercised on my behalf, 'that is on the penitential pilgrimage to Lough Derg, St Patrick's Purgatory, undertaken by his mother'. In your next give me all the precise

<sup>65</sup> DL. 2nd Aug. 1884.

<sup>66</sup> DL. 22nd July 1885.

information about the island and is Fr Gallagher still there?"<sup>67</sup>

The survival of the Donnellan letters is partly the result of his premature death on 20 October 1885. Addressed for the most part to his parents, they became a treasured heirloom and were passed on to the Salesians as a testimony to the holiness of this pious young man. In fact, they present us with an unparalleled and largely unvarnished witness to the experience of Salesian students in the period immediately before the commencement of the Salesian work in England.

### *The end of the story*

Fortunately the story does not end there. In the seventeenth volume of the *Memorie Biografiche*,<sup>68</sup> Fr Ceria chronicled the circumstances surrounding the death of the young Irish cleric, Francis O'Donnellan. Don Bosco visited the infirmary at the Oratory on the evening of the 19th October 1885 and found the young man at the point of death. He asked him if he had any last requests to be carried out on earth and whether he would be willing to carry Don Bosco's requests to heaven. Donnellan replied,

I am at peace; for this world, I have no requests of you. Tell me what you want me to do in the next.

'We will pray,' Don Bosco replied, 'that you will enter very quickly into heaven, and when you are there will you tell our Lady how very much we love her.'

Francis died on the evening of the next day, 20th October, and was buried on the morning of the 22nd. On the following evening Don Bosco had a strange dream.

Don Bosco had often had what he regarded as significant dreams, such as his first one at the age of nine which seemed to direct his ardent nature to a gentle yet strong love for other youngsters. In his later life, he would often relate his dreams to his Salesians and the boys as a means of encouraging some and warning others of the need for repentance and the shortness of life. The dreams undoubtedly tended to reflect Don Bosco's waking preoccupation with the eternal welfare of his pupils, but he also had an uncanny knack of predicting sudden and unexpected deaths among his pupils.

In this particular dream, which he related next day to his secretary and later to the members of the Superior Council, he saw Donnellan and a boy whose name he did not know walking with him towards a beautiful palace

<sup>67</sup> DL. 14th Aug. 1885.

<sup>68</sup> MB. XVII 504, 508.

with a dome, where Donnellan was greeted by a beautiful Lady... the boy, however, who persistently refused to give Don Bosco his name, was attacked as they drew near to the palace by an extraordinary wild beast. Don Bosco tried to defend the boy but ended up between the jaws of the monster himself, at which moment he woke up.

Don Bosco informed the superiors of the Oratory and they encouraged all the students to prepare well for confession and Holy Communion, as if for death itself. On the next day one of those who was only persuaded at the last moment to go to confession, a second year grammar school student called Archimedes Accornero had a fatal accident: a large pile of iron bedsteads collapsed on him, and he died that night from his injuries.

### *Some conclusions*

The Donnellan Letters provide an extraordinarily vivid picture of the situation faced by that first group of young Irishmen who became Salesians. It also provides us with an unrivalled account of life at the Oratory in the last years of Don Bosco's life and shows up very clearly the strains that this central Salesian community was undergoing, the pressures for a more managerial style of authority and the introduction of a more conventional style of training. From these letters it must be very clear that 'the good old days at the Oratory' are in danger of being unrealistically 'canonised'. They also highlight the problems of the growing distance between the Archbishop and Don Bosco and the effects that this had on the gradual separation of the Salesian Society from the Diocese of Turin. Most importantly, they explain how it was that Don Bosco was able to send English speaking Salesians to Battersea in 1887 and give a fascinating testimony to the fine character of Fr Edward MacKiernan, the first Superior at Battersea.

## BATTERSEA: A NIGHTMARE SETTING

Here for the first time, we seem to have a population which is in every element deteriorating, and it is this, I think, which makes the work so dismal and all that is done so ineffective. (C. Booth)

### The general background

While the mainstream of life and prosperity sets off due south, the scum and wreckage with it are thrown off on its Western edge. This wreckage may be traced all along the bank of the Thames and up the valley of the Wandle and it does much to aggravate the evil conditions found in a whole string of parishes.<sup>1</sup>

So wrote Charles Booth, the outstanding social researcher, about the parish of Battersea in 1901. Hence, even at the turn of the century, when London was enjoying its imperial zenith, Battersea already showed all the signs of inner city decay and deprivation. Ironically, 'the railway boom', the very cause of its early breakneck growth in the 1840's, became, like some new fangled curse, the cause of its steel bound isolation and early decay. Cut off on one side by the railway goods yards, which had once provided enlarged opportunities, and on the other side by the Embankment, Battersea became the net which trapped some of London's poorest inhabitants in a damp and dingy ghetto.

Battersea had been a Thameside village, famous for the early and fine tasting asparagus grown on its lush damp meadows and it had a population of 6,887 people in 1841. Within just 50 years it had become one of London's most populous boroughs with 150,558 inhabitants. The most rapid decade of its growth was 1861-1871, when the rate of increase reached 175.6%, while in the decade which followed it fell to the still not inconsiderable 40.4%.<sup>2</sup> These figures highlight Battersea's passage from hamlet to boom town. What followed was the slip to an inner city slum, deserted by the better classes and swamped by an influx of largely unskilled labour forced into the city by the agricultural depression of the 1880's.

The early stages of this process were marked by the rapid expansion of London's rail network. In 1838 the first south London line was opened

<sup>1</sup> C. BOOTH, *Life and Labour in London*, 17 vols, London, 1902-3, vol. 5, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> J. ROEBUCK, *Urban Development in 19th century London*, London, 1979, p. 144.

from Nine Elms through Battersea and Wandsworth to Woking. Although Waterloo became the passenger terminus in 1848, Nine Elms remained the central goods and repair depot for the London and South Western Company. The other companies soon followed suit. The London and Brighton Line had its headquarters at Battersea Wharf and the London and North Western at Falcon Lane. Clapham Junction with the goods yards that stretch to Nine Elms became and remains a major physical feature of the Battersea landscape. The other dominant feature, the river Thames, remained a major focus for employment as long as the ban on the railways carrying goods or passengers across the river lasted. Unlike the railways, the river seems to have given employment to the largely unskilled Irish who crowded into East Battersea. One of the best friends of the Battersea Mission in the 1870's was Mr Ney, a Galway man, who was Superintendent of the London Steam Boat yard and who found work for Catholic men.<sup>3</sup> The railways seem to have been closed to the Irish, partly because of their lack of education and also because of their exclusion from the skilled craft trades involved.

The other main sources of employment were the so called 'dirty trades', whose unpleasant by-products were best kept downwind of the capital, yet whose products were essential for the continuation of urban life. These included Price's Patent Candles, the London Gas Light works, and Courage's Brewery. All these consumed vast quantities of coal, which had to be heaved from the South Wales colliers docked at Nine Elms and Battersea Wharf, wafting clouds of gritty dust all over the district.<sup>4</sup>

While these industries drew people into the area for work, the agricultural depression caused by the falling price of wheat pushed more and more of the landless labourers into the city. Cheap grain had begun flooding into Britain across the Atlantic from the prairies, forcing the price down. At 50/- a bushel a wheat farmer could make a living, but by 1884 the price had fallen to 40/- and ten years later it had slumped to 22/-. At the same time the wages and conditions of agricultural labourers had begun to improve due to the development of Joseph Arch's Labourers Union and the threat to the landlord's power from the broadening of the franchise in 1884. Caught between the upper and nether millstones of falling prices and rising wages, cereal farmers fought off bankruptcy by wholesale sackings, resulting in the huge volume of casual labour seeking work in London.<sup>5</sup>

More specifically, for Battersea itself, the improvement schemes begun in Pimlico, Kensington and Chelsea pushed out the poorer elements in

<sup>3</sup> Southwark Archdiocesan Archive, Archbishop's House, St. George's Rd. SE1 6EH (Hereafter SAA.) West Battersea file (Hereafter W/B). Fr W.J. Connolly to Fr Ford (7.7.1883).

<sup>4</sup> A. LINKLATER, *An Unhusbanded Life*, London, 1980, p. 70.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

the population across the river to Lambeth, Battersea and Wandsworth, swelling the numbers of poor people inhabiting these boroughs and thus encouraging those who were better off to move further south to Balham, Clapham, and Wandsworth Common. These movements of population would account in part, for the deterioration so tellingly described by Booth:

We have met elsewhere, more crime, more drunken violence, with more degraded poverty, more insanitary conditions, and more wretched homes than are found here... Here, for the first time, we seem to have a population which is in every element deteriorating, and it is this, I think, which makes the work so dismal, and all that is done so ineffective.<sup>6</sup>

Booth attributed this to the phenomenon he described as 'the poverty trap'. He compared a healthy town to a healthy body. A free circulation of people and traffic to and from the city's heart was essential for the health of the organism: as with a body, where the circulation was impeded, that area putrified. Where people could not get out to find jobs, they were reduced to 'coster-mongering', only one step only above begging. Those who did find jobs moved out to a more convenient place, with the result that the area they left became exclusively inhabited by the very poorest of the community. Local commentators quoted by Booth seem to bear witness to this:

All tell of decadence; the district is changing for the worse; the decline has been more rapid in the last ten years. Houses built for one family have now one on each floor... and the inhabitants are more migratory; the whole area becomes poorer and rougher... the better streets are deteriorating.<sup>7</sup>

One particular black spot that Booth noted in West Battersea was Orville Road, less than a hundred yards from the Catholic chapel in Trott Street,

...with a class of inhabitant upon whom the deaconess may indeed practice, but upon whom no impression can be made... In it congregate criminals and gamblers. Pickets are placed at each end to give warning of the approach of strangers... Structurally, there is nothing wrong with the houses, but morally the place is 'a plague spot' which shows no improvement. If any decent people come there, it is because, having many children, they despair of finding other quarters, and the only thing to be done is to try to get them away again, although under increased difficulties because of the bad name coming from a street of this character.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> C. BOOTH, vol. 5, p. 166.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 166.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 163.



The effects of this rapid growth of population were felt in the strain they put on local services. Responsibility for sewerage, clean water, refuse collection as well as the prevention of infectious diseases was laid on the local vestries. Then, from 1855, they were organised by the indirectly elected Metropolitan Board of Works. Any increase in services had to be paid for by higher rates, hence the Vestries tended to avoid the extra provision as long as possible. What forced the Vestry in Battersea to move towards regular refuse collection and the provision of water on the constant service principle, was a suspected outbreak of cholera in 1883, incidentally confirming the Medical Officer of Health's prediction that,

the apathy of the (water) company in this matter is only equalled by that of the public, but a cholera or fever invasion may possibly effect what no amount of reasoning or warning appears, at present, capable of bringing about.<sup>9</sup>

Even when the Board of Works did provide the Low-Level sewer, it did not receive universal acclaim, because though it cleaned up the cess pools, still, the offensive smell from the drains were brought nearer the houses.<sup>10</sup>

At a social level, Battersea already faced the problem of inner city anonymity at the turn of the century, Booth wrote:

Most of them live in Battersea, only because it is within reach of their work, and have come there, rather than elsewhere, only because some friend or fellow workmate spoke well of the place.<sup>11</sup>

Even the Catholic community, normally a fairly homogenous group, of predominantly Irish origin, showed a very diffuse set of origins in Battersea. The Baptismal registers show a good sprinkling of French, German, and Scottish names, while a mere 25% of the names seem to be undoubtedly Irish.<sup>12</sup>

The mixture of classes, as Booth analysed it in 1901, indicated that Battersea was a largely working class area with almost a third of the population living in real poverty. Even if we include the whole Borough (the better off parts south of the Park and closer to Clapham Common) still, 70% of household heads were employees, 9% were employers, 21% were neither including 16% who were women. Booth calculated that 19.1% lived

<sup>9</sup> J. ROEBUCK, p. 96.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>11</sup> C. BOOTH, p. 163.

<sup>12</sup> *Liber Baptizatorum, West Battersea, Sacred Heart Chhrrch, Trott St., Battersea, Parish Archive.*



in overcrowded housing while 29.1% lived in real poverty. Booth's street by street analysis convinced him quite against what he set out to prove, that poverty in London was on the increase.<sup>13</sup>

The family history of John Burns, the Labour-Radical politician and first working man to achieve 'Cabinet rank', illustrates the experience of social deterioration. His father, Alexander Burns, was an agricultural engineer (or blacksmith) from Ayrshire who settled in Lambeth. The burdens of a large family and intermittent unemployment forced him to settle in Battersea. John Burns himself was the exception that proved the rule. He began his struggle to educate himself at Price's Candle Factory Reading Room, and worked through night school, until he managed to qualify as an engineer. But even with a recognised qualification, his early marriage and his frequent loss of employment due to his radical views tied him and his family to those mean streets round Clapham Junction. Yet this experience also made him willing to challenge the power of monopoly capitalism, if necessary with violent demonstration as he did in Trafalgar Square in 1887. Likewise he was not afraid to criticise that central Victorian article of faith, the Royal Family who, 'in his opinion were sufficiently well blessed, and mostly at other people's expense'.<sup>14</sup>

Another witness to the poverty and dereliction of Battersea, mentioned by Booth is the enigmatic figure of Charlotte Despard, an extremely wealthy widow and adoring sister of Field Marshal, Sir John French. In an effort to break out of an intense depression which followed the death of her husband, she devoted herself to working for the Battersea poor. Among the immigrant Irish women, she found an understanding of her loss and a faith to share. After her conversion to Catholicism, she bought a house in Battersea and in 1895 converted the bottom flat into a Boys' Club which Booth's investigators found to have a rare combination of care and freedom, in sharp contrast with the prevailing paternalistic Sunday school style. Her view of the contemporary conditions of the poor can be gauged from a passage from one of her novels called descriptively, *A Voice from the Dim Millions*

They call our deaths by many names — it is said to be consumption or heart complaint, or low fever, that is responsible, and people make it their boast that no one need die of starvation in England. But I should like to ask the doctors; what is the cause of consumption or low fever? In nine cases out of ten, it is Want — Want that presses upon us day after day, year after year, two meals a day, sometimes only one, dry bread and tea, tea and dry bread, eaten with work in the hand, and the needle flying between the mouthfuls — a straw mattress and bare boards at night, with a thin sheet for covering. Stitch, stitch, for thirteen,

<sup>13</sup> C. BOOTH, vol. 5, p. 153.

<sup>14</sup> K.D. BROWN, *John Burns*, London, 1977, p. 106.

fourteen or sixteen hours out of the twenty-four. Heartache, headache, sickness, rheumatism, but no rest, for a day without earnings means the rent unpaid and the children crying for food.<sup>15</sup>

### The Religious background

In South London as a whole, apart from certain isolated and exceptional instances, I have no hesitation in saying that it is the middle classes that attend church and chapel, the working classes and poor who stay away.<sup>16</sup>

This, C.F.G. Masterman concluded, was the result of *The Daily News* Religious Census of 1902. He estimated that the average adult church attendance in working class areas was between 6.5% and 6.0%, whereas in middle class areas the average attendance was 30%. The findings of this survey caused profound disquiet among the clergy and religious commentators of the day. It was seen as confirming their worst fears about the de-Christianisation of the working class.

The figures for West Battersea (ie. the parishes of St. Mary's, St. Luke's and the Caius College Mission) indicate that the Anglican adult Church attendance on the Census Sunday was 1127; if the Catholic attendance of 534 is added and an estimate of the Non-Conformist attendance (normally slightly more than the Anglican) is also added, then the total attendance for the area comes to about 3,000. If the numbers of 'twicers' is discounted at 36%, then, our overall figure represents only about 6% of the total population of this working class district. What is interesting from the Catholic point of view, is that adult Catholic worshippers would appear to represent about 29.9% of Battersea's total church going population.<sup>17</sup>

This figure would confirm the almost universal contemporary judgement that the only church to attract a substantial part of its congregation from the poor and the working class was the Catholic Church. D.H. McLeod attempts to account for the minimal level of working class church attendance by interpreting it as defensive behaviour which tends to avoid situations which might threaten a person's already minimal personal security. The instinctive reaction of the working class, he argues, was to show

...a concentration of knowledge, responsibility and personal ties within

<sup>15</sup> C. BOOTH, p. 192 and attached map.

<sup>16</sup> A. LINKLATER, p. 64.

<sup>17</sup> C.F.G. MASTERMAN, *The Problem of South London*, in R. MUDIE-SMITH, *The Religious Life of London*, London, 1904, p. 211.

a small area, and a lack of interest in events outside, and an indifference to questions of abstract principle, a low valuation of education and non-participation in organisations, which are all a form of self-defence; the demarcation of a limited area in which those at the lower end could secure themselves a degree of status and recognition.<sup>18</sup>

Any attempt to break out of this confined and essentially limited security was bound to be regarded with social disapproval. Even a working class radical like John Burns felt it necessary to seek employment in West Africa for two years after he had achieved his qualification as an engineer. Booth confirmed this phenomenon of social disapproval of activities outside the confines of working class life, when he described the Battersea woman who carried a beer jug on her way to church to avoid her neighbour's questions.

Forced to choose between food, clothes and fuel, essential to physical efficiency; the pleasures and companionship of the pub; or the subscription to a school or union or church, most preferred the first or the second; but some like the poor immigrant Jews gave precedence to their children's education, religious and secular, while others, like the Roman Catholics might spend on the pub and church and save on clothes.<sup>19</sup>

This probably goes a long way to explaining why these two minority racial and religious groups managed to maintain their own identity in a working class world where toughness was highly esteemed and religion was taken as a sign of weakness.

In the poorest areas of London's working class, an aggressive demeanour might be a requirement of self-defence; any form of religion (except Roman Catholicism, which could be taken as a harmless form of Irish eccentricity) qualified its professor both for bullying and general suspicion.<sup>20</sup>

Roman Catholicism managed to maintain some working class support but only where it could maintain a localised base, such as a priest and chapel around which the poor could gather and with which they could identify.

<sup>18</sup> D.H. McLEOD, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City*, London, 1974, p. 42.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

## The Catholic background

### *The Canon, the Countess and the Bishop*

The idea that the wealthy upper classes should provide for the religious needs of the poor is a commonplace in the development of a Christian conscience about the problems of an urban society. Battersea became the focus for a bewildering variety of different Christian groups trying to reach the urban poor, from the Caius College Mission to the Surrey Lane Temporary Baptist Chapel. Catholicism in Battersea owes its beginnings, in a large part, to the munificence of two wealthy ladies.

The Irish immigrants at Nine Elms provide the first locus for the development of the Church in Battersea. An unlikely pastor was appointed by Bishop Thomas Grant in the figure of a well known society preacher on the Roman scene, the former Vice-Rector of the English College, Canon Thomas A. Drinkwater. Having left the English College without the almost customary bishopric in 1865, he was appointed to Nine Elms in 1868. However, his honorary Canonry at Sta. Maria in Monte in Rome, and his wealthy Roman friends soon helped him settle into the stygian poverty of darkest Battersea. One of the canon's special gifts seems to have been an ability to interest wealthy matrons in his parish.

One of them was Mrs Jane Mary Boschetta Shea, the wealthy Spanish widow of an Irish Protestant. She offered to pay for the building of a Church at Nine Elms dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the title of the Canon's church in Rome, 'for the love of her dear husband'.<sup>21</sup> However all was not quite so simple, because of the interest in this church taken by another of the Canon's friends, the Countess Georgiana de Stacpoole. She was a Papal Countess of Irish origin whose family were first ennobled by the restored Louis XVIII. She had offered to pay for the altar of the church and the Canon soon found himself in the impossible position of having an offer he could not refuse or accept without giving offence to one or both of these great ladies. A dispute of almost epic proportions then ensued with both of these 'mulieres fortissimae' in high dudgeon, refusing to listen to the compromise proposals suggested by the Canon and put to them by the Bishop. Mrs Shea protested:

I feel very much now as Mme de Stacpoole herself would feel, if, while under the impression, that she was carrying out to the best of her power a work of love and charity for her own dear husband, I had, quite unsolicited by her, sent her the altar for it and would in no way be satisfied except that it should find a place there.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> SAA.(E/B) Mrs. Boschetta-Shea to Bishop Grant (31 Oct. 1868) East Battersea file.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

The canon's compromise solution was that, for the moment, Madame de Stacpoole's altar be accepted as the High Altar, but that ultimately, 'we look upon it as preferred for a side chapel, at some, I hope, not very future enlargement.'<sup>23</sup>

Mrs. Shea spiced her reply to the compromise proposal with a down payment of £.100 (twice what the carved stone altar was to cost) and yet, she withdrew her offer of chalices and vestments, a suitable mixture of ecclesiastical carrot and stick. She firmly rejected the compromise and expressed her outrage at being 'upstaged' by the Countess.

I should have thought, my Lord, that it would have been time to ask for aid [from Mme. de Stacpoole] on the day I cease to live, or when I told you I could do no more in the most cherished hope of my life, i.e. the raising up of an altar to the Lord, for the love of my dear husband, and in honour of Our Lady of the Scapular and St Joseph, her spouse.

On the following day she wrote again:

Never anticipating being frustrated by anyone in such a matter as that of an altar, which is, after all, the heart of the Church — the link between God, my beloved husband and myself...<sup>24</sup>

Concern for the religious needs of London's poor did not figure highly in Mrs. Boschetta Shea's explicit motivation, rather more important were her concern for her husband's eternal welfare, her somewhat gothic type of piety, and an uncompromising sense of proprietorial rights.

Tantalisingly, the correspondence ended without a clear resolution of the dispute, though the Church at Nine Elms has a carved stone altar in the Lady chapel which formed the original nave of the later extended Church.

The ever resourceful Canon was not dismayed by this misfortune, and was soon able to direct the Countess de Stacpoole's attention to Clapham Junction, the area at the West end of Battersea, where she found a suitable object for her zeal in building a church dedicated to the Sacred Heart. In 1873, the Canon had asked Henry J. Hansom, son of the famous Catholic architect and who was the Surveyor for the Metropolitan Board of Works in Battersea to enquire about the number of Catholics in the area. He replied that since the population itself had increased by one hundred times in the space of twenty years, then the number of Catholics must also have increased. On the basis of some informal enquiries, he felt he could list about 430 Catholics who were living within a mile radius of the 'Prince's Head' on the High St., although he estimated there were probably 1000

<sup>23</sup> SAA.(E/B) Canon Drinkwater to Bishop Grant (30 Oct. 1868).

<sup>24</sup> SAA.(E/B) Mrs. Boschetta-Shea to Bishop Grant (31 Oct. 1868) E/B,SAA. and Mrs Boschetta-Shea to Bishop Grant (1 Nov. 1868) E/B,SAA.

Catholics in all, living there, in fact, but he could not confirm this, without a door to door survey.<sup>25</sup>

This rather sanguine estimate was soon criticised by the priest at Wandsworth, when he heard rumours about the setting up of a new Mission at Clapham Junction. He doubted, 'whether the numbers would ever reach 200 never mind the 1000 mentioned by some, which I regard as a gross exaggeration.'<sup>26</sup>

In January of 1874 Canon Drinkwater explained his reason for wanting a new parish at Clapham Junction to the Bishop:

I am fairly concerned that the kind of Catholic in this neighbourhood cannot be influenced unless the centre of operations is closer to them. For some weeks I have visited Europa Place every week, and I find it a hopeless case. They will not come two miles to Church, they will not send their children two miles to a Catholic school and the consequence is that those who are coerced into school are attending the temporary Board school, and will in great numbers attend the new Board school.<sup>27</sup>

The Canon's opinion would seem, therefore, to fit in with McLeod's theory that to travel two miles to the Church at Nine Elms would threaten their feelings of security.

By the end of October 1874 the Countess had purchased a piece of land belonging to Mr Trott, at what her lawyers regarded as the enormous price of £.1000. The corrugated iron chapel, with a turret and cross surmounting it was opened by Bishop Dannell on the tenth of October 1875, at the cost of £.700.<sup>28</sup> Building temporary churches of corrugated iron was commonplace in Battersea during the 1860's and 1870's. St. Mark's Church had begun life in 1868 as an iron chapel, and was later sold for £.400 in 1874 and replaced with a permanent building, at a cost of £.5,045. A similar story can be told of the Temporary Baptist Chapel in Surrey Lane.

What seems to have been most unusual about this particular iron Church, or the Sacred Heart Mission, Clapham Junction, as it was called in the the first entry in the *Catholic Directory* for 1875, was that the Countess herself, according to her own testimony, took up residence in a caravan made of the same material as the Church itself, next to the sacristy. She lived there for five years (1874-79), though a family memoir suggests she kept a suite at the Cadogan Hotel as well, no doubt for the occasional hot bath.<sup>29</sup>

The Countess Georgiana was the eldest daughter of Richard, first

<sup>25</sup> SAA.(E/B) H.J. Hansom to Canon Drinkwater (16 May 1873).

<sup>26</sup> SAA.(W/B) West Battersea File. Fr McEvoy to Bishop (11 Sept. 1874).

<sup>27</sup> SAA.(E/B) Canon Drinkwater to Bishop (26 Jan. 1874).

<sup>28</sup> SAA.(E/B) Hastings and Sons to Bishop (26 Oct. 1874).

<sup>29</sup> SDB.GB. Mme de Stacpoole to Don Dalmazzo (15 Oct. 1887).



Duke de Stacpoole, a notable collector of foreign titles. His father George, the first Conte de Stacpoole had been forced to move to England upon his conversion to Catholicism, by a disapproving Protestant Irish family. After a successful business career he set up house in Grosvenor Square and had the exiled Louis XVIII as a neighbour and friend. At the Restoration he removed to Paris where he received a French title. His son Richard was created Visconte de France (21st July 1818), made a Marquis by Pope Leo XII in 1828 and Duke by Pope Gregory XVI in acknowledgement for his services in rebuilding St Paul's-outside-the Walls.<sup>30</sup> During the Roman Republic (1848-9), Georgiana's brother, George Stanislaus, the third Duke, was caught smuggling letters for Pius IX, and imprisoned in Castel Sant'Angelo; He received the Order of Christ from a grateful Pope, an exclusive honour later bestowed on prince von Bismarck at the end of the Kulturkampf.<sup>31</sup> In 1850, Georgiana herself received a Bavarian honour for her part in the smuggling incident, being created a Canoness of the Royal Chapter of St Ann of Munich.<sup>32</sup>

According to a family Memoir,

She divided her time between Rome, Paris and the Cadogan Hotel, London. She never married, saying that she would never bend her will to any man. She built a Church in Battersea, now rebuilt and enlarged; she also helped build a Church in Kildare. Her share in the family furniture was destroyed, uninsured, in a fire in the Baker St. Depository. She died in Paris and is buried at Salins, near Fontainbleu. As she bought an annuity for herself, she had nothing to leave on her death.<sup>33</sup>

The Countess certainly brought an unexpectedly aristocratic dimension to the Catholic Community that gathered round her Church in Trott Street. The Countess insisted in her deed of gift to Bishop Dannel that the Church of the Sacred Heart be a separate parish with its own resident priest.

The first priest, Fr Patrick McKenna, came to reside in Trott Street in a room he rented from Mrs Mary Pash. She was an Irish woman, a widow with seven children, who worked as a laundry woman to keep her family from the workhouse. He stayed at 22 Trott St until he was transferred in 1883,<sup>34</sup> and it was to this house that the first Salesians came for a meal on their first night the 16th November 1887. The Pash home seemed to be the heart of the Catholic Community in Battersea because even after the priest

<sup>30</sup> *Burke's Peerage*, Foreign Titles of Nobility, London, 1936, p. 2602.

<sup>31</sup> G. de STACPOOLE, *Irish and other Memories*, London, 1922, p. 52.

<sup>32</sup> *Burke's Peerage*, p. 2602.

<sup>33</sup> De Stacpoole Family Memoir, kindly shown me by Mr. Robert de Stacpoole.

<sup>34</sup> *Catholic Directory and Ordo*, London, 1876 and 1883, and Testimony of Sr. Eileen Bleach SND, granddaughter of Mrs. Mary Pash.

was withdrawn, sick calls were directed to Mrs Pash's address, according to the *Catholic Directory 1885*.<sup>35</sup>

The size of the Catholic Community in West Battersea can be estimated from the Synod Returns or Scrutiny Papers, which every Mission had to submit to the Bishop each Whitsun.<sup>36</sup> From 1877 they give figures for the total number of Catholics, the number of Baptisms in the previous year, figures for Marriages, Easter Communion, and the number of children in Catholic schools and at the Board schools (see table two). All of these figures have to be regarded with caution, not only because of discrepancies between the registers and totals given in the returns, but also because they formed the basis of the financial contribution each Mission had to make to the diocese.

The number of Mass-going Catholics who made their Easter duties (Confession and Holy Communion within Lent and Eastertide) during the first two years of the Mission's existence was about 150 per annum, not too far from the Wandsworth priest's estimate. But if Fr. McKenna's figures are at all accurate, then by 1881, his numbers had doubled. [Easter Communion in 1877 = 175, and in 1881 = 468].

The average Sunday collection for this early period came to £2.18s.4d,<sup>37</sup> about 1½d per head for the 468 Catholics who made their Easter duties in 1881 (the year before the collection was recorded). The pattern that emerges then, is of a congregation which grew from 150 to about 400 in 6 years.

This growth is marked in the Baptismal registers which show whole families returning to the practice of their faith by having three or four children baptised on one day (e.g. the Burns, the Stones, and the Jacquiers). From the names recorded it would appear that West Battersea was quite cosmopolitan, because French, German, Scottish and English names form about 75% of the total, while the obviously Irish names make up the rest. There are some discrepancies between the numbers recorded in the baptismal registers and those in the Synod returns, the most glaring one being for the years 1876 and 1877. In those years there were 37 baptisms registered in 1876 and only 18 in 1877. According to the Synod returns, there were 25 and 27 respectively. One would be inclined to prefer the register's figures as being first hand contemporary evidence, were it not for the fact that a child with the same name, parents, and date of birth was baptised, according to the register, twice, in two consecutive months. In general though, the pattern suggested by the register seems quite reasonable, namely of an initial boom period where older children are being baptised, followed by a

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Liber Baptizatorum*, Battersea Parish Archives.

<sup>37</sup> SAA.(W/B) Fr W.J. Connolly to Fr Ford (7 July 1883).



slacker second year. The fall off in numbers in 1877 might well be explained by the priest's absence, for no Baptisms at all are recorded at the Sacred Heart Mission between August 1877 and January 1878. (See Appendix Two) By 1879, however, the number of Baptisms recorded had increased to 40 per annum.

Undoubtedly one of the major factors in the growth of the community was the opening of the Catholic Elementary School on the Trott St site. It was ready for occupation in November 1878, built by H.J. Hansom and paid for by Bishop Dannell at the cost of £.575. By 1880 there were 95 pupils in a school equipped with only 54 benches.<sup>38</sup> The steady growth of the school in those years, [it reached 477 pupils in 1892, among whom 99 were non-catholics] indicates its importance not just as an indicator of, but also as an attraction to the growth of the Catholic community.

Notably absent from the development of the school, though it was built on her gift of land, was Mme de Stacpoole. She steadfastly refused to contribute to the construction, and even at this early stage there seemed to have been personal difficulties between herself, F. McKenna and H.J. Hansom. Her style of patronage and the poverty of the Battersea Catholics meant that the Sacred Heart Mission remained somewhat precariously based during these early years.

From the beginning the countess took her duties as patron very seriously indeed. In her letter inviting Bishop Dannell to open the Church, she has decided every detail: what he was to wear: a humeral veil she had embroidered in Rome, what hymns were to be sung, 'the beautiful motet *Veni Jesu non tardare* which we all believe to be so true'.<sup>39</sup> She concerned herself with every detail of Church furnishings, from candelabra to curtains, vestments and linen. In 1887 she could produce a thirteen page list of furnishings which had belonged to the Church.<sup>40</sup> She eventually engaged in a bitter correspondence with Bishop Coffin (Bishop Dannell's successor) when he withdrew the resident priest and removed the valuables from the Church to East Battersea.<sup>41</sup> Nor was she above warning the incoming Salesians about a nun who should be dismissed from the teaching staff of the school:

It seems to me that V.B. (il vescovo Butt) should know that the nun (la monaca, la quale vengia del Nemico) the one that comes from the Devil, did what she liked with the other parish priest of the Sacred Heart. She

<sup>38</sup> SAA.(W/B) H.J. Hansom to Bishop (21 Nov. 1878).

<sup>39</sup> SAA.(W/B) Mme. de Stacpoole to Bishop (29 Oct. 1874).

<sup>40</sup> SDB.GB. Undated list of properties to be asked for from the east Battersea Church in Mme. de Stacpoole's written in French.

<sup>41</sup> SDB.GB. Bishop Coffin to Mme. de Stacpoole (22 Dec. 1882) 'There is no intention of giving up the Mission of the Sacred Heart, on the contrary we are begging in *The Tablet*, week by week, for contributions for a new Church.'

is not a person whom one can trust. An English priest who knew all about it told me that right from the start, you should take on new schoolmistresses, because you should not have within your house those who are your enemies.<sup>42</sup>

Relations between Fr. McKenna and the Countess were rather strained, and given her delight in ecclesiastical paraphernalia and her commanding manner, this is not surprising. Perhaps the episode of the nun caused the final rupture in relations so that the Countess withdrew from the caravan in 1879, and Fr. McKenna wrote to the Bishop asking to be replaced because he had a bad throat due to the damp.<sup>43</sup> In another letter he reminded the Bishop of his request, and hoped it would be possible to find someone who would get on better with the Countess. Further grounds for conflict occurred when Fr McKenna let it be known he wanted the Church which would replace the iron chapel to be called St. Patrick's instead of the Sacred Heart. The gap in the baptismal register may suggest an absence due to ill-health, but the final withdrawal of the priest in 1883 suggests something more serious.

The Bishop's decision is perhaps, best explained by the financial problems of the parish as well as the dangers of isolation for the priest. A whole collection of bills for repairs and a couple of notices from the Board of Works make it clear that the building was in a state of grave disrepair and constantly needed attention. The seriousness of the problem was made clear to the bishop when he received a Licence for use of the building for a further period of only 12 months after which it was to be taken down and removed at the owner's expense.<sup>44</sup> In 1882 H.J. Hanson reported to Bishop Coffin that the building was insecure and was in grave danger of being wrecked in a storm.<sup>45</sup> In the following year Bishop Coffin paid a bill for £.225.1s.Od. for repairs to the iron chapel.<sup>46</sup> With only £.2.18s.Od. coming in weekly the parish was clearly not financially viable.

Apart from finance, the lack of a proper priest's house might well have been a problem. Canon Drinkwater replied to a proposal from Fr. McKenna in 1880,

With regard to the sleepy state of the Sacred Heart Mission, I suggest

<sup>42</sup> SDB. Archives GB. Mme. de Stacpoole to Don Dalmazzo (15 Oct. 1887): "Mi pare che la V.B. può capire che la Monaca, la quale venga del Nemico, la quale ha fatto come voleva con l'altro parroco del Sacro Cuore, non è la persona in cui si può aver fiducia [...] Un sacerdote Inglese che sapeva tutto, mi diceva, Bisognerebbe prendere dal primo momento le maestre nuove così non avreste in casa gente naturalmente nemica".

<sup>43</sup> SAA.(W/B) Fr McKenna to Bishop (23 Jan. 1878).

<sup>44</sup> SAA.(W/B) Metropolitan Board of Works, Licence (29 May 1879).

<sup>45</sup> SAA.(W/B) H.J. Hanson to Bishop Coffin (11 Nov. 1882).

<sup>46</sup> SAA.(W/B) Receipt for L.225. 1s. Od. paid by Bishop Coffin (31 Dec. 1882).

that things should remain as they are at the moment, (i.e. with the priest at Trott St) and a Mission be preached by the Redemptorists and more effort be put into the schools... but agree that the efforts of three priests, if they resided together, might improve the situation.<sup>47</sup>

In 1883 Fr. McKenna was moved and a third priest, who looked after West Battersea, was sent to reside at Nine Elms. The Bishop's problems with Battersea were far from over because as the Countess later recounted, she regarded this as breaking the conditions of the original deed of gift.

The Countess's position as 'donor and patron' of the Sacred Heart Mission was a remarkable one, more characteristic of rural Catholicism half a century earlier, than of a London Borough towards the turn of the century. Her position was one of the unexpected consequences of the clergy's efforts to mobilise better-off Catholics to provide for the religious needs of their poor co-religionists.

Cardinal Manning in 1866 had founded the Association of the Sacred Heart, 'for the education of the children of the poor in London'. It was founded,

...to promote the compassion of the faithful for the thousands of children exposed to danger and daily perishing in the streets of London, and to kindle more zeal among us... It may be safely affirmed that thousands of Catholic children are without education in London (between seven and ten thousand).<sup>48</sup>

Manning was further convinced, unlike many of his Catholic contemporaries that the prevailing interest in social concern or 'social science' was to be welcomed,

It leads its adherents into the haunts of squalor and fetid misery, into hot beds of contagion and rookeries of abject want, if not into the very dens of crime. It breaks through the barricades which custom has built up, impervious as a castle wall, between the several classes.<sup>49</sup>

The Countess, admittedly not because of her interest in social science, but rather because of her religious zeal, must have come to know at first hand the conditions of the poor especially during her period of residence in the caravan.

What moved Mme de Stacpoole to interest herself in the Sacred Heart Mission was probably her aristocratic French background more than either Manning's appeal or the prevailing English interest in social concern. In reaction to the disaster of the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune,

<sup>47</sup> SAA.(W/B) Canon Drinkwater to Bishop Coffin (18 May 1880).

<sup>48</sup> E. MANNING, *Dublin Review*, New Series, vol. VII, London, 1866, July, p. 110.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

conservative elements in France had almost restored the reluctant Legitimist claimant, the Conte de Chambord, to the throne. God, it seemed, had pronounced judgement on the Revolutionary tradition, and only a return to the traditional religious basis of society could offer any hope for the future. The cult of Reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the insults suffered by the Church during the Commune found expression in the building of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre in Paris. It was surely not just a coincidence that the Countess should be building her own shrine to the Sacred Heart in London while the French National Assembly was debating the Bill to purchase the site in Montmartre as an act of National Reparation.<sup>50</sup>

Her deeply personal motivation meant that she felt obliged to protest to the bishop about the withdrawal of the priest and ultimately when she received no satisfaction, to the Pope himself. In her petition to Rome she complained,

...The Baptismal font was established. The Civil authority for conducting marriages was obtained and the sacred vestments and vessels and all other objects necessary for worship were acquired by the foundress... but the bishop said that he did not have either the means or the priests available... (so that the Mission)... would, from now on cease to be a parish and become only a chapel dependent on the nearest parish... Your Holiness can see from the above that the hopes of the Donor are being frustrated... she, therefore, begs that the deed of gift made in 1874 to the Bishop of Southwark, in the presence of the notary Hastings in London, should become entirely null, and should in no case be presented by any future bishop of that diocese against Don Bosco and the Salesian Congregation, they having become proprietors of the aforesaid enclosure.<sup>51</sup>

The Countess had probably met Don Bosco through Mgr Kirby at the Irish College in Rome. She had become one of his great benefactresses, helping in the building of the Sacred Heart Basilica in Rome, the foundation of the house in Paris and with the building of a Mission in Patagonia.<sup>52</sup> The above petition must have seemed very unusual to the

<sup>50</sup> J. McMANNERS, *Church and State in France 1870-1914*, London, 1972, p. 40.

<sup>51</sup> MB. 18: 801: "Monsignor Butt Vescovo attuale, pregato di continuare a conservare come parrocchia la chiesa, fece dire alla sottoscritta non aver egli mezzi occorrenti e sacerdoti disponibili per la chiesa del Sacro Cuore, la quale d'ora in avanti cesserebbe d'esser parrocchia, per non essere che una cappella dipendente dalla parrocchia più vicina... La contessa di Stackpoole desidererebbe finalmente che l'atto di donazione fatta nel 1874 al Vescovo di Southwark, in presenza del notaio Harting a Londra venisse intieramente annullato ne' potesse in nessun caso essere presentato dai futuri Vescovi di quella diocesi contro Don Bosco e la Congregazione Salesiana, divenuti proprietari di tutto il recinto suddetto".

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 17, p. 358, 363, 429.

officials at the Congregation of Propaganda to which it was referred, not so much that a bishop was in dispute, such appeals to Rome were encouraged, but because it was addressed by a lay person in what had become a largely clerically dominated Church. Surely only a lady with an established position in the so-called Black aristocracy would even have attempted such a move, much less succeeded in it.

Bishop John Butt, Bishop of Southwark from 1886, happened to be in Rome for his *ad Limina* visit in 1887 and met Don Bosco at the celebrations for the consecration of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. He tried to dissuade Don Bosco from the idea of coming to Battersea alleging truthfully, '...the poverty of the place and the impossibility of its even supporting one priest'. On his return to London, one of his priests reportedly congratulated him on having met a living saint, 'Some saint', he replied, '...He may be a saint but according to his own pattern. He is certainly a stubborn old man with a mind of his own.'<sup>53</sup> When Bishop Butt was told that Don Bosco had said that the Salesians would come to Battersea and that this house would be one of the great houses of the Congregation, with a grand Church and vast playgrounds, he replied, 'But where will Don Bosco find space for all this? Well, I suppose there is always Battersea Park.'

Not unnaturally Bishop Butt found it somewhat difficult to deal with two characters who were as determined and well connected as Don Bosco and the Countess. The one surviving letter from Don Bosco to Bishop Butt showed a rather formal Religious Superior writing to inform the somewhat reluctant bishop that the Congregation of Propaganda had decided that there was '...a church in the diocese which it is agreed the Salesians should take over in September or October 1887'.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., vol. 18, p. 450: "Con un santo?... E chi mai? gli chiese. — Con Don Giovanni Bosco di Torino. — Un santo quello? Sarà un santo, ma a modo suo. È un uomo tenace delle proprie idee... Don Bosco... mi disse: 'Monsignore, i Salesiani verranno a Battersea. Li avremo una chiesa grandiosa e vasti cortili. Quella diverrà una delle grandi case della congregazione". Ma dove potrà Don Bosco trovare spazio per tutto questo? A meno che vada nel giardino pubblico di Battersea!"

<sup>54</sup> SDB. Archives GB. Don Bosco to Bishop Butt (27th Aug. 1887).

*Table of Statistics*

<i>SYNOD RETURNS 1876-95</i>	<i>MISSION OF THE SACRED HEART,</i>							<i>OLD BATTERSEA WEST.</i>			
	1877	1878	1879	1880	1881	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892	1895
Nos Catholics	–	450	440	500	600	1500	1500	1500	1500	1500	2300
Baptisms	28	25	33	37	34	41	70	88	96	107	139
Marriages cath	–	1	3	3	5	–	–	–	–	–	6
Marriages mixed	–	–	1	1	2	–	–	–	–	–	6
Easter Comm.	175	124	195	287	468	300	350	370	430	450	495
in school	–	–	–	95	–	165	304	315	389	477	–
child comm.	–	–	–	34	–	60	65	80	105	118	–
RCs in Board schools	–	15	23	11	9	30	28	32	34	11	–

*Other data from Synod returns 1895-1902*

	1895	1896	1897	1902
Nos Catholics	2300	2300		
Baptisms	139	97	97	117
Marriages	12	13	–	17
Easter Communions	495	506	–	–
in school			440	–
Mass Attendance				
Passion Sunday	764			
Palm Sunday	849			
Easter Sunday	901			
Low Sunday	800			
Nos in religious houses (20 salesians)	50	56		

*Names from Liber Baptizatorum, West Battersea*

1876	1877	1878	1879	1880	
Hansom	Kelly	Dyrun	Morgan	Poland	
Horan	Smyth	Jonah	Walker	Mansell	
Birioth	Dyer	Sanders	Plant	Chase	
Brandon	Appleber	Tighe	Allgood	McArthur	
Poland	Dwyer	Michelle	House	Penanio	
Ottaway	McElligot	Sparkes	Burke	Lovatt	
Maffert	Blake	Salter	Burke	Bissell	
Bradley	Gill	Barry	Jones	Stroud	
Bradley	Barry	Barnes	Farrman	Stroud	
Kealey	Burns	Alvey	Heiniker	Stroud	
Nevens	Blount	Giard	Blich	McMahon	
Lency	Michell	Jennings	Smith	Stroud	
Herweiller	Stanton	Panino	Smith	Stroud	
John	Michell	Jennings	Smith	Whimskey	
Tingall	Crolly	Attwood	O'Meara	Robinson	
Burns	Crolly	Attwood	Kelly	Kucherman	
Burns	Power	Kealey	Pearce	Morgan	
Burns	Poland	Phelan	O'Sullivan	Stroud	
Burns		Tindel	Cadrey	Holmes	
Sweeney		Highburne	Coyne	Fairman	
Martin		Walker	Fizgerald	Martin	
Martin		Baumgarten	Cottin	Smith	
Philips		Whitehead	McCray	Kiaz	
Sullivan		Walker	Oliver	Phelan	
Eustace		Sayers	Willis	Lenahan	
Stone		Garet	Hare	Batley	
Stone		Donnington		Buss	
Stone		Cotter		Buss	
Stone		Gage		Fizgerald	
McNeilly		Barry		Glassnett	
John				Stanton	
Jacquier				Stanton	
Jacquier				Tragel	
Jacquier				Stanton	
Smyth				Laxdale	
Smalls				Kealey	
McNeilly				Oliver	
				Drummond	
				Sayers	
				Ebel	
37	18	30	26	40	TOTAL NAMES
9	10	4	8	6	Irish Surnames
5	0	2	1	1	French





## LAYING THE FOUNDATION IN BATTERSEA

There is no better foundation stone than  
the tomb of a priest and religious.<sup>1</sup>

### The Countess the Bishop and Rome

The Countess de Stacpoole's overwhelming passion was to see her 'dear little church' opened again and she viewed every circumstance and everyone from the Pope down as means or obstacles to that end. Hence, when as early as 1881, the diocese of Southwark lost Bishop James Dannell, she took the advice of the Servite Prior and

immediately the new bishop is named, I will go in person with the magnificent letter from Mgr. Kirby, who loves Don Bosco so much. But since he is Irish, it might be better to have another letter from an Englishman, like the Cardinal [Howard].<sup>2</sup>

She soon began to see that Cardinal Manning was unlikely to welcome a new religious order into his diocese because he was convinced that 'the faithful will help these orders or religious congregations and that this help should all go to the parishes'.<sup>3</sup> Her reaction was to regret the appointment of,

these bishops [converts] like the Cardinal, who cannot support religious orders. Cardinal Wiseman, his predecessor and educated in Rome and was all for them, as was Bishop Grant, first bishop of Southwark, Roman educated and who even used to say that England will not be converted except with the religious orders.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Archivio Salesiano Centrale, Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco. Via della Pisana, 1111, 00163 Roma. [Hereafter ASC. The number of the Micro fiche quoted is 3558 which is part of the Fondo Don Rua A8. is the number of the page.] The document reference is thus abbreviated ASC. 3558. A8. Galeran-Rua: 11 Nov. 1888: "Il n'y a pas de meilleure première pierre qu'il est le tombeau d'un prêtre et religieux."

<sup>2</sup> ASC. 157. B3. Cont. Stacpoole-Venerato Padre: "Il priore, mi ha detto che è meglio, che subito che sarà nominato el nuovo Vescovo, io vado in persona, con la magnifica lettera che tengo già del buon Mgr. Kirby, che ama tanto Don Bosco. Ma come egli non è Inglese, sarebbe meglio che avesse una ancor di un Inglese, come il Cardinale (Howard)."

<sup>3</sup> ASC. 157. C3, C4 Contessa di Stacpoole-Riverente Padre: "...Egli dice che i fedeli aiuterebbero questi ordini, o congregazioni religiosi e quel ajuto sarebbe tutto alle parrocchie."

<sup>4</sup> ASC. 157 Bosco C11: "La disgrazia del presente sono questi vescovi (convertiti) come

In fact, after an interregnum of nearly a year, the newly appointed Bishop, Robert Coffin CSSR, replied to the countess that he had no intention of abandoning the (West Battersea) church and was, in fact, in the process of appealing for funds for it in *The Tablet*.<sup>5</sup>

But it was not until his successor, Bishop John Butt was appointed in 1885 that the Countess could begin to put her plan to transfer the church to Don Bosco into effect. She soon wrote to Don Bosco:

...from the moment, the Bishop of the diocese confesses that he has neither the priests nor the means to give to that parish.<sup>6</sup>

Thus with a note of triumph she reported the new bishop's attitude, knowing that she could now obtain the canonical transfer of the church at Battersea to the Salesians through the Curia.<sup>7</sup>

The reluctance of Cardinal Manning and some other bishops to accept new religious orders into their dioceses was, no doubt, a result of the persistent disputes over their respective rights and privileges which had come to a head in 1875 in Salford over Jesuit plans to open a new Grammar school. The Jesuits plans were in conflict with Bishop Vaughan's own plans for St. Bede's College Manchester. During that year, the Jesuit General and Bishop Vaughan had, in fact, managed to resolve the dispute between themselves. However, Cardinal Manning was determined to break, once and for all, what he regarded as the overweening pride and privileges of exemption claimed in England by the established religious orders, especially by the Jesuits, Benedictines and Franciscans. They claimed with some justification that during the penal period the Church in England had been largely dependent on their efforts for its survival. They further suggested that their foundation in the absence of regular episcopal authority gave them the right to administer their traditional missions free from the newly established hierarchy's direct control.

The dispute was taken to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in Rome by the Cardinal in 1877, and a Commission of ten Cardinals sat for nearly a year and then published their decision on May 8th, 1881 in the Bull *Romanos Pontifices*. This decision gave the religious exemption from episcopal control within their own houses but it guaranteed the Bishops rights over the parish churches, which were to remain part of the property

il Cardinale che non possono sopportare gli ordini religiosi — Il cardinale Wiseman predecessore e educato a Roma, era tutto per loro, anche il vescovo Grant il primo del diocesi Southwark educato a Roma pure diceva che l'Inghilterra non si convertirà che con ordini religiosi."

<sup>5</sup> SDB-GBR. Bishop Coffin to Lady Stacpoole, (22nd Dec. 1883).

<sup>6</sup> ASC. 156. E1. 'Il senso della supplica': "...che dal momento che il Vescovo della diocesi confessa che non ha né prete né mezzi per dare a quella parrocchia..."

<sup>7</sup> ASC. 156. D10.

of the parishes.<sup>8</sup> This legislation was to be very significant in the negotiations for the contract to be drawn up between Bishop Butt and the Salesians for the opening of Battersea.

On the 29th April 1887 Bishop Butt made his first *ad limina* visit to Rome. On the 10th May he submitted his report on the state of the diocese to the Congregation of Propaganda. This showed that the number of priests in the diocese had risen from 144 in 1852, when Bishop Grant took over the new diocese, to 196 in 1887. The problems of non-attendance at Sunday Mass and the Sacraments by the poor were lamented, as were the evils of drunkenness among them. It reviewed as possible remedies the expansion of Catholic schools and Catholic associations which might provide some refuge from the prevailing 'Protestant atmosphere'. While Bishop Butt was praised in the comments made on the Report by the Secretary for the number of children in Catholic schools and the number of religious in the diocese [described as '*numerosissime*'], he was criticised for not providing more 'news'. Here, quite clearly, the Curia's self confidence, encouraged by its success at the Vatican Council, was exercised in making a new bishop feel the need to render a more detailed account of his diocese.<sup>9</sup>

### **Battersea, Francis Bourne and Bishop Butt**

When Bishop Butt faced Cardinal Simeoni at the Congregation of Propaganda two petitions relating to the Salesians had to be dealt with, namely, the case of the Countess de Stacpoole's church and the case of Fr Francis (later Cardinal) Bourne, one of Bishop Butt's most promising priests. Mme de Stacpoole had submitted her petition on Feb. 18th 1887 and Francis Bourne submitted his on April 25th of the same year.<sup>10</sup>

The sense of Mme de Stacpoole's submission was that since the Bishop of Southwark found himself unable to fulfil the conditions of the deed of gift made by donor, namely, that the Sacred Heart Church, Battersea should be a separate parish church, then she was free to transfer its ownership to Don Bosco's society. The rescript which she received from Propaganda acknowledged her claim and saw

no obstacle to the above mentioned church and the attached ground, passing to the Institute of Don Bosco, provided that the Salesians

<sup>8</sup> J. METZLER, *Sacra Congregazione de Propaganda Fide*, Memoria Rerum, Vol. III/2, 1815-1972 (Roma, 1976).

<sup>9</sup> Scritture Riferite nei Congressi (hereafter, SRC.) 1887-1888, Anglia, Vol. 27 (10 May, 1887) Relatio: p. 279 and comments by Ant. Savelli Spurda, p. 278.

<sup>10</sup> ASC. 157. A6: Stacpoole's Letter. E. Oldmeadow: Francis Cardinal Bourne. (London, 1940), p. 167.

assume the burden of parochial duties and the care and maintenance of the school.<sup>11</sup>

Mgr. Butt's objections, if he had any, seem only to have secured that the Salesians would assume parochial duties and maintain the parish elementary school. On this issue he appeared to have been overwhelmed by the combined forces of the Countess, Don Bosco and that wily curialist Tobias Kirby.

In marked contrast, the case of Francis Bourne is very interesting for it shows the magnetism of Don Bosco and also how it was possible for a diocesan Bishop like Butt to get his own way against a formidable alliance of saint and Curia.

Francis Bourne recorded in his Spiritual Notebook the conference that Don Bosco had given at St Suplice just before he was ordained to the sub-diaconate in 1883. According to his petition to Cardinal Simeoni: 'I have had this in mind for 5 years and nearly 20 months have elapsed since I made my desire known to my Illustrious Bishop.'<sup>12</sup>

Cardinal Simeoni must have had earlier warning of Bourne's petition because in February he enquired about the Bishop's opinion of Bourne and received a glowing testimonial on March 26th, 1887.

Francis Bourne, is the best sort of priest and very edifying. He is young and if I am not mistaken was promoted to the priesthood only 4 years ago. In the last 18 months he has asked many times permission to enter the Congregation founded by Don Bosco. Up until now I have refused or rather I have deferred my consent, wanting to give him time to come to a solid decision, and also because there is great scope for that side of ministry to which he finds himself attracted, that is the education of children, in this diocese. Besides, he is assigned to the Mission of which the Rector is Provost Wenham, and he would be very upset if he had to lose his assistant, whom I cannot easily replace at the moment. On the other hand, I do not wish to oppose absolutely his request which is supported by his Spiritual Director. I should say he might be given the permission to go towards the feast of St Michael, should he continue to be of the same mind.<sup>13</sup>

Bishop Butt's reply shows his esteem for the young Bourne, an esteem which led the Bishop to entrust to him his project for a junior seminary and

<sup>11</sup> Lettere e decreti della Sacra Congregazione e Biglietti di Mons. Segretario. Vol. 383: 1067/87. 23rd, March: "Mi è grato di significarle che nulla osta a che la suddetta chiesa coll'annesso terreno passi all'Istituto di Don Bosco purché però i Salesiani assumano il disimpegno dei doveri parrocchiali al distretto addetto alla chiesa stessa e l'incarico di mantenere la scuola."

<sup>12</sup> SRC. Anglia, Vol. 27, p. 167.

<sup>13</sup> SRC. Anglia, Vol. 27, p. 167. Lettera di Mons. Butt al Rettore del Collegio Inglese, 26th March.

then a new diocesan seminary at Womersley, from which Bourne became coadjutor and then successor to Bishop Butt at Southwark. His loss to the diocese would have been a much more serious blow than the transfer of the Countess's church. Bishop Butt, therefore, showed a degree of skill in his timing which allowed him to appear to give way to Bourne and yet to retain his services for the diocese. His determination to postpone Bourne's departure till the end of September (St Michael's day, 29th September) meant that the arrival of the Salesians in England was timed to coincide with his departure for Turin. This, no doubt, put pressure on Don Bosco and the other Superiors to encourage Francis Bourne to stay in Southwark. They were only too aware of the first Salesians' need for friends in a totally alien environment and also of the lack of parish experience of both Frs MacKiernan and Macey. Both were in their early twenties, with hardly a day's parochial experience between them. Bourne certainly went out to Turin in Autumn 1887, where he made a retreat, but strangely enough for someone who had been determined to apply, against his Bishop's advice, to the Holy See for a dispensation, he returned to Battersea where he was to act as parish priest *pro tem*.

Bishop Butt thus was able to regain Bourne's presence in the diocese and after a few months at Battersea at the end of December he received his new appointment.

When Ernest Oldmeadow consulted Bourne's personal papers with a view to publishing them, he made the intriguing discovery of a letter from Don Bosco, the text of which had been cut out leaving only the address and signature. Perhaps Don Bosco had concluded one of his private arrangements with Bourne whereby he became a Salesian 'Extern'. He certainly always considered himself a Salesian Cooperator or co-worker. According to the first issue of *The Catholic Press* for which Bourne was a correspondent, he had become a Salesian:

DON BOSCO. - It is not the fact that Don Bosco proposes to take up residence in or at present to visit London, as has been stated in some of the papers. Don Giuseppe Bologna, the Superior of the Salesian House at Lille, is expected this week. He comes to view the premises at West Battersea, merely as a preliminary measure before undertaking the charge of the Mission, Don Giuseppe Bologna will be accompanied by Rev. F. Bourne who has lately joined the congregation (and contributes an account of its work to our columns in this first edition of the CATHOLIC PRESS). He will be the guest of the Redemptorist Fathers at Clapham.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> First Issue, 'Catholic Press', 29th Sept. 1887. ASC. 3557. Rua C5 ff. "He will be the guest of the Redemptorist Fathers at Clapham." See also E. OLDMEADOW, *op. cit.*, p. 133, vol. I.

This report adds to the mystery, because it authoritatively denied rumours that Don Bosco himself was coming to London and gave information about the way the Superior Council in Turin had decided to proceed with the Battersea foundation. It seems most probable that Bourne himself had supplied the information on instructions from the Superiors in Turin. This implies a level of trust appropriate only to a close friend, if not a formal member of the Society. Bourne displayed qualities one would associate with a member of the Salesian family: he welcomed MacKiernan and his companion on the night of their arrival at Battersea, he adopted the Salesian spirit both in his work for orphans at West Grinstead and among the boys whose vocations he nurtured at Henfield and later at the new Seminary at Womersley. According to his biographer the Salesian style of friendly informality was Bourne's open secret.

In reply to a letter from Don Bosco, Bourne wrote in December:

I have taken the decision not to leave the diocese and I have said to the Bishop that I will stay under his jurisdiction. At the same time I have asked his permission to stay here for some time to help your Fathers, and he has willingly agreed.

Therefore, dear Father, I will not have the good fortune to be one of your children, but I hope you will always regard me as a devoted friend.<sup>15</sup>

That, he certainly continued to be all through his life as did his mother Mrs. Ellen Bourne who in 1887 was distributing circulars for the Salesians among her friends.<sup>16</sup>

### **Seeing the difficulties**

The first Salesians only began to realise what a difficult mission they had assumed when they crossed the Channel and saw London for the first time.

Despite the Papal rescript, the commencement of the English Mission required the consent of the governing body of the Salesian Society, the Superior Chapter. Since Don Bosco was by now unable to attend its

<sup>15</sup> ASC. 1458 Bosco C7, C8 Bourne-Bosco: "J'ai pris enfin la détermination de ne pas quitter la diocèse et j'ai dit à l'Evêque que je resterai sous sa juridiction. En même temps je lui ai demandé la permission de rester ici pendant quelque temps pour assister vos Pères et il l'a accordée biens volontiers [...] Quoique, mon Père, je n'aurai pas le bonheur d'être au nombre de vos enfants, j'ose espérer que vous me regarderez toujours comme un ami dévoué."

<sup>16</sup> ASC. 1458 Bosco C5-6. Acknowledgements to Mrs. Ellen Bourne.



sessions because of ill-health. Don Rua presided in his absence. He had a far from easy task convincing the other members of the wisdom of accepting this parish in far off England.

Don Rua disclosed that Don Bosco had accepted a church in England from our outstanding benefactress, the Countess de Stacpoole. The Holy Father has already given his delegation. We need to appoint a priest, a cleric, (student for the priesthood) and a coadjutor (lay member of the Society).

Don Sala (asked) if we could withdraw from obligations like this by declining them, and if the Bishop of that diocese was favourable.

Don Rua replied that the bishop was favourable, however, having said that he added that before going to England, we should write to him.<sup>17</sup>

Far from accepting the decision as announced, Don Sala did not hesitate to question it.

Don Rua reported that the bishop was favourable, that they had met in Rome and that he had said that we could either develop the church of the Countess or open another, better one. He added that Mgr Kirby, at 85 years of age, had visited Don Bosco three times to beg him to go to England insisting that the opportunity of entering England should not be missed. But Don Sala was still not convinced.

He raised the dangers for a young priest living in lodgings; he said that Protestants would cause an uproar as soon as letters arrived and some... for a joke, would go to the confessional to seduce the priest.

Don Rua was faced with a great deal of fear and prejudice about England, but he brought the discussion to a close with these balanced conclusions,

...first of all we should send someone with the job of visiting the place; we should also write to the local Bishop and be guided by his reply; the Countess de Stacpoole should be content that we are going to take possession and then, even if we returned to Italy for some time, no point of honour is involved.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> ASC. 0592. *Verbali delle Riunioni Capitolari*, Vol. 1, June 10th, 1887, p. 99: "Presiede D. Rua. Sono presenti D. Durando, D. Lazzerio, D. Francesia, D. Belmonte, D. Cerruti, D. Sala, D. Bonetti."

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*: p. 99: "D. Rua espone come D. Bosco abbia accettata una chiesa in Inghilterra dalla Cha Contessa Stapol[sic] nostra insigne benefattrice. Il S. Padre ha già data la delegazione. Bisognerà destinarvi un prete, un chierico ed un coadiutore — D. Sala chiede se si potrà uscire da simile impegno, declinandolo, e se il vescovo di quella diocesi sia favorevole — D. Rua risponde il vescovo essere favorevole, aver detto però che prima di andar in Inghilterra, scrivessimo a lui... D. Sala osserva i pericoli di un prete giovane in casa a pigione. Dice che i Protestanti tempestano subito di lettere chi arriva e certe [...] vanno al Confessionale per sedurre il prete — D. Rua conclude che prima si manderà uno incaricato di visitare il

In September 1887, the Countess herself was in England 'working for you'.

I have seen the dear little church. Oh, what desolation! The urchins play in turn, they have destroyed all the fruit and the trees, and many of the crystal windows of the church of the two schools; ...

[stone throwing vandals are not a phenomenon restricted to the Battersea of our own age]

...There is only one cry here, for the coming of the priests. We hope for two English among others; one for the parish, the other for the little ragamuffins.<sup>19</sup>

### Fr. Dalmazzo's visit

Father Francis Dalmazzo, former Procurator of the Society in Rome and well known to Mme de Stacpoole, made an exploratory visit to London in the second week of October 1887.<sup>20</sup> He found little in the immense city to warm his heart, though he thought Clapham Junction amazing and was very impressed by the welcome he received from the priest at St. Thomas's Wandsworth, Fr Henri D. Galeran, a French priest of the Southwark diocese. On his first day in England, he reported on the Mission:

I have not yet inspected the forseen field of my labours. They tell me in fact, that the Iron Church, given so much build up, is a thing of very little consequence and of no value, lasting only a little while, being put there as a way of establishing a foothold, while waiting for better times, when, therefore, we will have to build a new church.<sup>21</sup>

luogo, scriveremo al Vescovo locale regolandoci secondo la risposta. La contessa Stapol si contenta che si vada a prendere possesso e poi si ritornasse anche in Italia per qualche tempo non le importa. In ciò mette il suo punto d'onore."

<sup>19</sup> ASC. 156 Bosco C12, Sept. 10 - London.

<sup>20</sup> Don Francesco Dalmazzo was Procurator of the Salesian Society in 1884 when Mme. de Stacpoole first came to offer her help to the Salesians. After his visit to England, he served as the Director of various communities and died tragically at Catanzaro in 1895, murdered by a former ecclesiastical student, to whom he had refused ordination. See E. VALENTINI ed., *Dizionario Biografico Salesiano*, Torino, 1969, entry under Dalmazzo.

<sup>21</sup> ASC. 203 Bosco C10, C11. Dalmazzo - veneratissimo Padre. /9.10.1887): "Eccomi giunto [...] Non ho ancora veduto il campo provvisorio delle mie fatiche. Mi dicono pero, che la chiesa di ferro così magnificata sia cosa da poco, di nessun valore, di poca durata, essendo stata fatta non come cosa definitiva, ma come provvisoria; una specie di piette a terra, in attesa di tempi migliori, in cui si sarebbe fatto una vera chiesa."

The process of making a realistic report began next day, though Fr Dalmazzo was obviously keen to be finished:

My mission is complete. I have visited everything with calm and thoughtfulness and have spoken at length with Bishop John Butt and it seems every difficulty may be overcome. The Bishop welcomed me with great charity and kindness in a truly fatherly way he assured me that every difficulty would be smoothed over. He himself will write and speak to Fr Connolly the neighbouring Parish priest, named by the Countess as the Enemy, ordering him to give back everything presented to us in the beginning.

Let me add only one thing, that the Bishop made one condition and that was, that given, God avert, that the Salesians were unable to keep the parish then the property would return to the diocesan bishop. He has no preference between English, Irish or Italian for PP., but that he should seem the most capable and pious. The parish of Battersea is Irish and that he leaves it to the wisdom of Don Bosco (to decide).<sup>22</sup>

In his report on the corrugated iron church building he remarked that all the Catholic Churches here had begun in this way; in fact, Fr Galeran's at Wandsworth was even smaller '*e più brutta*'. One further difficulty he foresaw was that municipal approval was required for its use every two years and £.500 would have to be spent to make it usable.

He managed to be more hopeful about the site, which was about 2000 metres square, with room for a fine church and two playgrounds, and the school which was extremely well attended by 250 boys and girls and accommodated in light and airy brick built premises.

The Catholics were certainly for the most part poor labourers who worked at the local gas works though there were better off members of the congregation, who were doing a lot for the parish. He mentioned Fr Bourne, saying that, 'the priest who has decided to become a Salesian is a real gem, helping me with translation.'<sup>23</sup> The Bishop was only willing to let him go to Turin because he is getting two Salesian priests in his place. In fact, it was Fr Dalmazzo who suggested that Fr Bourne be left to help the

<sup>22</sup> ASC. 203 Bosco D1, D2. Dalmazzo - Amatissimo Padre (10.10.1887): "La mia missione è compiuta. Ho visitato tutto con calma e ponderazione, ho parlato a lungo col Vescovo Mgr. John Butt, e pare ogni difficoltà sia appianata... Il Vescovo mi accolse con grande carità e bontà veramente paterna mi assicurò che ogni difficoltà era appianata. Egli stesso scrisse e parlò col parroco limitrofo, P. Connolly, designato dalla Contessa come nemico e gli ordinò di tenersi pronto a cedere ogni cosa appena noi ci fossimo presentati... Mi soggiunse però il Vescovo che egli metterebbe una condizione, ed è che dato, *quod Deus avertat* che i Salesiani non possano più tenere la Parrocchia, la proprietà ritorni al Vescovo diocesano." As to the choice of Parish priest: "era indifferente, ma che si vedesse di mandare il più capace ed il più pio."

<sup>23</sup> ASC. 203. Bosco D6: "che il prete accettato per farsi Salesiano è un vero gioiello."

newcomers, explaining that he found himself not too well and struggling to adapt to the custom of sleeping without having some 'minestra', and of not having a drink except a small glass of beer at the end of the meal, and he found himself generally suffering from the great cold.

In the following two letters later in the same month, he dealt with the legal problems of owning property in England, where a civil agreement had to be signed and a form of 'trust' seemed to be necessary.<sup>24</sup> Fr Galeran introduced him to the lawyers and helped to avoid a large bill. He also told him that he could expect little more than 100 lire in the weekly collection.

In what was perhaps, the most revealing comment on the situation he found, Fr Dalmazzo expressed his unwillingness to remain in England:

I thank Don Bosco through you, for the mark of trust given me by saying — you have nothing against my staying in London. It grieves me very much that my physical condition and habits do not allow me to remain.<sup>25</sup>

He was very anxious that they should send out MacKiernan by the end of the month, because the Bishop wanted to introduce the Salesians on the feast of All Saints. He also foresaw what was to become a major difficulty, namely the problem of the contract with the Bishop. He consulted the other religious orders on what he regarded as the excessive harshness of the terms, whereby the diocese would make no compensation to the religious order for improvements made to the Church or parish premises, should they relinquish the parish. He further recognised the difficulty of getting a male cook and explained that in England, even the Palottine Fathers have ladies to work for them.

The one piece of consolation he was able to offer was that the parish contained what was said to be Sir Thomas More's garden, to which he used to come across the river early on summer mornings, having served Mass, to take his breakfast.<sup>26</sup>

## **The arrival**

Fr Dalmazzo returned to Italy before the end of October and it was left

<sup>24</sup> ASC. 3557 Rua C1 on the need for a Trust, C9 Dalmazzo-Rua (9.10.87): "...che non è sufficiente un semplice atto della curia, come si è fatto a Roma, ma che è mestieri un atto legale, notarile..."

<sup>25</sup> ASC. 3557 Rua D1 Dalmazzo-Rua (9.10.87): "...La ringrazio e per mezzo suo ringrazio il caro e venerato Don Bosco del voto di fiducia datomi dicendomi aver nulla in contrario che io resti a Londra. Mi duole però assai, che le mie condizioni fisiche e morali non mi permettano di restare..."

<sup>26</sup> ASC. 3557 Rua D1. A reference to St Thomas More's garden.

to Francis Bourne to welcome the pioneers to Battersea. 'I expect the Fathers tomorrow,' he wrote on 15th Nov. 1887, 'at Victoria at 5.00 — in that case, we will have something to eat at number 26 at 6.00 Mrs. Pash will have the 'minestrone' ready.'<sup>27</sup> The only other testimony to their arrival comes from the family memory of the home that first received them. One of the daughters of the Pash family used to tell her children how frightened she had been as she took the two Salesians to see the Iron Church on that first night and how she had had to walk the whole length of the building in the dark to turn on the gas for the lights which was up near the altar.<sup>28</sup> What they saw no doubt filled them with dismay, but Henry Galeran must have soon reassured them by his great faith and sense of mission, which he expressed in a letter to Don Rua:

There are poor children, erring and abandoned in incalculable numbers in the dark corners of this immense Babylon. Nothing can equal the zeal of the English clergy but a great part of the harvest is lost for lack of workers. Dear Father, the souls that cost our Saviour so much are calling out to you and await you. I know no quarter of London which needs you as much as Battersea. I call on Don Bosco and his Sons — Father, you will be rejoicing before long to have taken possession in the name of Jesus Christ of this capital where so many sins are committed, and so many souls are in ignorance and are lost. How blessed are the feet of those men who are coming to us in the name of the love of Christ who loved children so much and considered souls worth the shedding of his blood.<sup>29</sup>

### *The first year: A vision disillusioned*

The population of Battersea have not given one penny because they have not seen any visible trace of the work of Don Bosco for the education of the young. They see a parish kept by two poor young priests who haven't a penny and that is the same as nearly all the English parishes and it matters to no one. (Mme de Stacpoole)

<sup>27</sup> SDB. GB. F. Bourne 15 Nov. 1887 (text in French).

<sup>28</sup> Verbal Testimony Sr. Eileen Bleach SND. March 1986, SDB. GBR.

<sup>29</sup> ASC. 203. D9, D10, D11. Galeran - Révérend et Vénéré Père (15. Oct. 1887): "Les enfants pauvres, errants et abandonnés, sont en nombre incalculables dans les replis de cette immense Babylone. Rien ne peut égaler le zèle du clergé anglais; mais une grande partie de la moisson se perd faute d'ouvriers... Mon Père, ces âmes qui ont tant coûté à notre Sauveur crient vers vous et vous attendent. Je ne connais pas dans Londres un quartier qui ait plus besoin de vous que Battersea [...] J'ai appelé don Bosco et ses enfants. Vous vous réjouirez bientôt Père vénéré d'avoir pris possession au nom de J.C. de cette capitale où tant de péchés se commettent, où tant d'âmes sont dans l'ignorance et se perdent. Qu'ils soient bénis les pieds de ces hommes qui nous viennent au nom de Celui qui aimait tant les enfants et qui a estimé les âmes au pair de son sang."

*A sad beginning*

On January 31st 1888, Don Bosco died at the Oratory in Turin at the age of seventy-three. That same day, the little community at Battersea received the sad news by a long treasured telegram.<sup>30</sup> Fr Michael Rua had been appointed by Don Bosco as his Vicar General in 1884 and his position as the new Rector Major of the Salesians was confirmed by Rome on Feb. 11th 1888. Although the foundation at Battersea was prepared and planned by Don Bosco, it was Don Rua who was to be responsible in a very special sense for its growth and development. This is evident from the collection of almost two hundred letters of direction and encouragement which wrote to England down to this death in 1910.<sup>31</sup>

*The problem of destitution*

One of the most obvious differences between the circumstances of the Salesians in England and those on the continent was the lack of popular financial support. The only letter of Fr MacKiernan to survive testifies to this abiding problem: they found it almost impossible to support themselves or their work financially. His letter sent to Mme. de Stacpoole annoyed her so much that she sent it to Turin in protest.<sup>32</sup>

We are here, at last, at your Church in Battersea, and Deo Gratias we have taken a little house near the Church for which we pay 11/6d a week. We have furnished it with the bare necessities and this will cost us 40/-. We have a person who consented to let us have the goods on credit, as we have no money with us. Don Bosco charged us to write to you stating our actual position. We are destitute of everything. We do not complain on that account, for we know that our condition is but that in which Don Bosco himself was placed at the commencement of his work... We are obliged to rent a room for Fr Bourne at 5/- a week as ours is too small for 5 persons. In answer to the appeals, which have weekly appeared in the Catholic journals, we have received nothing and we must pay now for the publication. The persons of influence whom we have visited are delighted at our arrival, hoping of course, that we are going to open a house for boys, but they give us no pecuniary help.

The financial situation was desolate. Indeed, his calm, unvarnished approach brings out quite starkly the financial realities he had to face. What really nettled the Countess, however, was his attitude to the question of the contract.

<sup>30</sup> SDB Battersea House Archive.

<sup>31</sup> Don Rua's letters to England were for the most part written to Fr Charles Macey who succeeded Fr MacKiernan as Superior at Battersea and the letters span the years to 1909.

<sup>32</sup> ASC. 158 Bosco E4, E5, E6. E.P. MacKiernan - Stacpoole.



Concerning the contract, we cannot sign anything at present as it would not be prudent, until we see whether we can remain or not. We are all willing to labour all our lives in this place and with the help of God we shall do so, but if we cannot find the necessary means to carry on our work, it would be useless to sign any contract.

Lady Stacpoole was not slow to protest at what she regarded as a lack of spunk:

I should have told you that MacKiernan tells me that he refuses to sign the contract because he does not know if the Salesians can remain at Battersea, not having the means. (I have the letter with me).

As a consequence she did not hesitate to cast doubt on MacKiernan's ability to be the superior, and raised what was to be one of her frequent appeals, that the superior should be an Italian.

You see that the young priests are now alone at Battersea and without great prestige, already there is news that the Irishman has done several imprudent things. Indeed the present state of affairs is altogether quite unpleasant and pleasing to the Enemy — but why not send us Don Marengo...<sup>33</sup>

On the very next day, in even higher dudgeon, she wrote again, having just received a further appeal for funds, this time from Fr Macey.

He speaks to me of all the debts (which I know all about from my own experience) of the need to pay the church gas bill at Christmas, the water bill for the house, the need to pay the debt of 1500 lire made by Don Dalmazzo, the organist's fee, the woman who cleans the school, the expenses for worship etc. and it is the poor who form nearly the whole congregation of that place. We only have 50 lire a week for food and there are four of us to live on that sum, [Macey is quoted as writing].

The enraged Countess continued,

The population of Battersea have not given one penny because they have not seen any visible trace of the work of Don Bosco for the education of the young. They see a parish kept by two poor young

<sup>33</sup> ASC. 158 Bosco C2. Stacpoole - Revti. Signor. (1 Dec. 1887): "Avevo dimenticato di dirle che il sig. don MacKiernan mi ha detto che rifiuta di firmar il contratto perché non sa se i Salesiani potranno rimanere a Battersea, non avendo mezzi, (ho qui la lettera vicino a me)... Vedo che i due sacerdoti giovine sono adesso soli a Battersea e senza gran prestigio; già che sono così scoragiti temo che l'Irlandese faccia alcune imprudenze. Intanto, lo stato presente là è abbastanza infelice per far' piacere aglii nemici — ah! perché non manda Don Marengo?..."



priests who haven't a penny, and that is the same as nearly all the English parishes and it matters to no one.

With that devastating comment Lady Stacpoole proclaimed herself unable to help; further, she refused to receive any more appeals from MacKiernan or Macey and suggested that they should raise a loan on the security of the considerable piece of property she had given them.<sup>34</sup>

In the same vein, she complained, 'This nation (the British) does not have Missionary blood, rather they seek the comforts of life.'<sup>35</sup> Nor is she to be put off by Don Rua's fair words,

Your last letter does not answer me but is written only in general terms, 'that God has called us to administer the parish'... This seems as if you have taken it but I know enough of English law to know that a contract that is not signed, has no effect in law, and in that case, the Salesians are not the proprietors of Battersea but it is still the bishop. I am dealing with you because you are the Superior and so, in business, and in this particular matter, your signature alone can console me and certainly no more of your fine words.<sup>36</sup>

### *The contract*

Discussions over the contract went on throughout the year. The main points under discussion were the Bishop's request that should the Salesians ever leave, the property would return to him, and not, therefore, to Mme. de Stacpoole. This was accepted without demur by the Salesians. In line with the new legislation *Romanos Pontifices*, the bishop was also unhappy

<sup>34</sup> ASC. 158. C4, C5, C7. Stacpoole - Riverente Signor (2 Dec. 1887): "...Mi parla di tutti gli debiti (che conoscono bene per l'esperienza) che bisogna pagar a Natale — debiti di gaz, per la chiesa, [...] una debita di Lire 1500 che ha fatto don Dalmazzo — poi l'organista, la donna che pulisce la scuola, la chiesa [...] le spese per il culto etc. ed dare ai poveri... che fanno tutta la Congregazione quasi di quel sito. Non hanno che come 50 lire a settimana per il vito, e sono quattro persone di questa somma [...] La popolazione di Battersea ne nessun non dano un soldo perché hanno visto che non si tratta affatto del opera di Don Bosco per l'educazione dei ragazzi [...] Si vede una parrocchia tenuta da due poveri giovine Sacerdoti che non hanno un soldo, e questo è come tutti quasi i parrochi Inglesi, e non importa a nessun."

<sup>35</sup> ASC. 157. D4 Contessa di Stacpoole - Riverente Padre (29.11.1887): "Quella nazione non ha il sangue missionario, cerca primmieramenti i comodi della vita."

<sup>36</sup> ASC. 157. D8, D9: "La di lei lettera ultima non mi risponde a questo, mi scrive soltanto in termini generali e 'Che Iddio gli avendo chiamati ad amministrare la Parrocchia'. Questo sembra come se lei l'avesse presa, ed io conosco abbastanza la legge inglese per sapere che un contratto che non è firmato in regola non ha valore affatto e che in questo caso i Salesiani non sono Proprietari di Battersea ma ancora il Vescovo. Tratto con lei perche siete il Superiore e che in affari, ed in questa, la firma soltanto può consolarmi e nullamente tutte le sue buone parole."

about a compensation clause (for improvements and additions) added by the Salesians. This clause,

seems to me to be open to objection. If the Fathers erect buildings as a Refuge for youngsters they might not be of any use to the mission. If, on the other hand, they build a permanent church, this will be erected with the alms of the faithful, given obviously for the purpose of the mission and should, therefore, remain the property of the mission whether directed by the Fathers or secular priests.<sup>37</sup>

Despite this, the Superiors in Turin insisted that some form of compensation clause be built in even if it depended on judgement of an arbiter.

### Life at Battersea

But all was not darkness and dispute in those early days. Two weeks after their arrival, Fr Galeran wrote to Fr Dalmazzo to thank him for his visit and he described how he had visited the fledgling community at Battersea, and taken Rossaro, the cook, to buy a meat mallet at Clapham Junction. The discovery of this treasure cheered up the good brother, and the rest of the community had their spirits raised when Fr Galeran managed to buy them a picture of St. Francis of Sales which they had hung up in the front room. Galeran, then noted that Fr Macey had not yet arrived which may suggest that that Macey did not travel with the first group on the 16th of November.<sup>38</sup>

The other witness to the early days at Battersea are some letters from Fr Giovenale Bonavia to Don Giulio Barberis, his novice Master. Fr Bonavia had entered the Novitiate at San Benigno Canavese in 1881 and was professed in 1882. He, then, went back to the Oratory until 1887 when he came to England.

He described the little church at Battersea in a comic vein, as being

<sup>37</sup> ASC. 3557. E4. Bishop J. Butt - Fr MacKiernan (17.7.1888): "L'ultima clausula... pare a me non del tutto libera da obiezioni (letteralmente: mi pare aperta a obiezione). Se i padri erigono fabbricati pel ricovero dei ragazzi non sarebbero di utilità alcuna alla missione. Se d'altronde fabbricano una chiesa permanente, questa essendo eretta colla limosina dei Fedeli, data appunto secondo lo scopo della missione, dovrebbe rimanere proprietà di questa sia che essa sia diretta dai Padri, sia dai preti secolari."

<sup>38</sup> ASC. 3557. D9, D10, D11. (24 Nov. 1887) H.D. Galeran - Bien cher D. Dalmazzo: "Je suis allé, mardi, voir vos Pères a Trott. Street P. Macey n'était pas encore arrivé. J'ai pris le bon Frère Rossaro avec moi pour un 'giro'. Il s'est montré très content... Je l'ai pris à Clapham. Il était malheureux parce qu'il n'avait pas un marteau pour frapper le viande... De plus nous avons découvert avec Rossaro une belle peinture, tout encadrée, de St. François de Sales."

10 minutes brisk walk away... it is on its own, with a de luxe belfry (which looks like a pointed furnace) on its frontage. In the mist it looks quite ghostly, but the reality is much more prosaic.<sup>39</sup>

In another letter he described it thus:

...the rest of the Basilica (which is what I imagined before...) continues to keep the appearance of a station shed, or a puppeteer's stall such as you see... or at the Porta Palazzo. The whole thing... despite the efforts of many workmen for several weeks to renovate and white lead it, still lets the rain in, which accompanies the eternal mist. [An added attraction were its other inhabitants]... Inside, a family of devout and pious rats reign supreme. Yesterday at the first Mass of Fr Macey, during a moment when Rabagliati had ceased to send forth voice from the gratings of that small and stuffy room (more apt for a prison than for that of orchestra pit for which it was intended) our attention was demanded by the yelping sounds. There was a male and female rat contending for the primacy of honour...

The parish, in terms of its territory, occupies a corner of a great quadrilateral. The most miserable corner (known by the name Little Hell) closed in behind the banks of the river, which blocks its extension on every side. The better off people who live at the opposite corner and who could help, hate coming into this quarter...

I have found besides, some very good Catholics; some boys who come to Church and serve Mass with a dutifulness and reverence that makes

<sup>39</sup> ASC. 3557 E8. Bonavia - [D. Giulio Barberis] Amatissimo Sig. Direttore (2.11.1888): "La Chiesetta Parrocchiale (lontana dieci minuti camminando di buon passo) è là isolata con un campanilluzzo (pare un fornello aguzzo) sul frontone; nella nebbia sembra un fantasma. È una realtà assai più prosaica..."

The following passage continues ASC. 3558 A4, A5, A6: "...il resto della Basilica (che prima di venire m'immaginava non so che di splendido) continua a fare la sua figura di una tettoia di una stazione o di una baracca di marionette, quali si vedono talora costì al rondò o a porta palazzo. Il tutto [...] e nonostante il lavoro di parecchi operai per alcune settimane per rinnovarla e imbiancarla, pure nelle piogge che accompagnano questi eterni nebbioni, dentro si è ancora irrorati... Dentro però una generazione di topi, pia e divota, vi regna soerana. Ieri alla prima Messa di Don Macey, in un momento che Rabagliati aveva cessato di mandar fuori la voce dalle grate di un bugigattolo stretto e buio (più atto a prigione che ad ufficio di orchestra a cui destinato) l'attenzione fu chiamata da guaiti; erano un topo e una topessa che si contendevano il primato d'onore."

The final passage comes from the first quoted letter ASC. 3557 E9, A10: "...La parrocchia poi, riguardo al suo territorio, occupa un angolo d'un gran quadrilatero, l'angolo più miserabile (conosciuto col nome di piccolo inferno) chiusa dietro le spalle dal fiume impedita d'estendersi d'ogni parte. La gente benestante, che sta all'angolo opposto, e che potrebbe soccorrere, aborrisce di venire in questo borgo... Trovai oltre dei buon Cattolici: dei ragazzi che frequentano la chiesa servono da clero con un assiduità e contegno che mi meravigliarono; e dire che molti vengono di lontano e molti vivono in famiglie mezzo protestanti; sono impiegati e vivono in un mondo (si vede abbastanza alla sera) — eppure così buoni."

me marvel, and they tell me that many come from afar and live in half-Protestant families. They are employed and live in world (you see enough every evening) that is not at all good.

His impression of the quality of the youngsters in the area led him to consider the future development of the work at Battersea.

...But I believe and the other confrères believe it along with me, that if this house cannot grow in any other way, still it can grow by getting not a few vocations from among these young men.

This possibility was confirmed when Fr Macey found a boy waiting outside the house for an hour in the rain, to tell him of his longing to become a priest and yet the dreadful circumstances he had to live in. This coexistence, in Battersea, of genuine piety and the dens of iniquity amazed the early Salesians and made their minds move towards providing a Refuge where boys from poor backgrounds could be educated and prepared for the priesthood.

There seems to be no doubt that the Countess's jibe about there being no typical Salesian work in evidence at Battersea hit the mark. No oratory for youngsters was established in those early years, nor ever did the idea really develop in England, instead a billiard club for adults quickly emerged. The other traditional Salesian work of orphanage and trade school had to wait till the advent of the second generation of Salesians. The business of trying to run a desperately poor parish in a deprived inner-city area seemed to absorb all their energy. Both Frs MacKiernan and Macey seem to have seen their main task as being to provide the necessary priestly services, Mass, the sacraments, and particularly Confession, on which Don Bosco himself had laid such stress for his youngsters.<sup>40</sup> [In fact, people travelled long distances to go to Frs. MacKiernan and Macey to Confession.] They also introduced other traditional Italian devotions, feast days, and associations. But they did notice the needs of the young lads who came to serve Mass, and naturally began to think of trying to provide them with the sort of education that would prepare them for the priesthood.

The movement away from the oratory and towards providing secondary boarding schools for poorer boys was characteristic of the whole Salesian Society at this period:

The Salesians themselves showed a growing preference for private boarding high schools over every other type of institution (parishes, semiboarding schools, dayhop schools, etc), even over oratories [...] It was responsible in no small measure for the consolidation of Don

<sup>40</sup> P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia della Religiosità cattolica*, Roma, 1981, Vol. II, p. 310.

Bosco's institution. His boarding high schools ensured a population of students, less transient and more organisable than the population of the oratories... There were less creative demands on these schools than on the Festive oratories; but they served as so many seed-beds from which to draw new recruits into the family of his educators.<sup>41</sup>

These factors help explain to some extent, the total absence in England of the characteristic work of the Salesians in Italy, the oratory.

### Fr MacKiernan's illness

On November, 11th 1888, Fr Galeran was sufficiently concerned about the seriousness of MacKiernan's condition to write to Don Rua to warn him.

To-day, dear Fr MacKiernan had me called and I thought it was necessary to give him the last Sacraments. He desired the services of my ministry and an hour after mid-day, in the presence of the Fathers, I gave him Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction. He renewed his profession of faith, I recalled his vows and the consolation of being a religious and a son of Don Bosco. He is admirable in his patience and his resignation to the will of the Master. He understands his state and sees that the moment for going to his Master cannot be long delayed.<sup>43</sup> You may await the news of his death at any moment, perhaps, even before you read this letter, but this evening it will be a consolation for your fatherly heart to know that Fr MacKiernan has prepared himself gallantly as a Salesian should.<sup>42</sup>

MacKiernan already seems to have suffered from a weak chest before coming to England, but the hard work and financial worry must have played their part. He finally succumbed to an infection caught while rushing in a sweat to the death bed of one of his parishioners. Rashly he spent many long cold hours in the damp atmosphere of the badly heated room, caught 'flu and from then, went steadily downhill'. No doubt, the efforts he made to bring back lapsed families to the faith [more than forty Catholics were baptised in the first year, including two or three whole families], the poor

<sup>41</sup> P. STELLA, *Don Bosco Life and work*, New York, 1985, vol. I, p. 127.

<sup>42</sup> ASC. 3558. A8, A9. H.D. Galeran - Très Rev. et cher Don Rua, (11 Nov. 1888): "aujourd'hui le cher Père McKiernan m'a fait appeler et j'ai jugé qu'il fallait lui donner les dernier Sacraments. Il a désiré les services de mon ministère; et à une heure après midi, en présence des pères, je lui ai donné le S. Viatique et l'extrême onction. Il a renouvelé sa profession de foi. Je lui ai rappelé ses vœux, la consolation d'être un religieux et un fils de don Bosco il est admirable de patience et de résignation à la volonté du Maître. Il comprend son état et voit que le moment d'aller rejoindre son Père n'est pas éloigné."

living conditions, and his financial worries made him a likely victim for a chest infection like tuberculosis.

In September, he returned to Turin to see Don Rua, make his Retreat, but even there he was continually attacked by the fever. His friends testified that he often repeated during those days his determination to return to London, 'I want to work as long as I can, for the days of my life are drawing to an end.'

Mgr. John Cagliero, the first Salesian Bishop and Cardinal, came to visit him on the 16th November, at Don Rua's request, and MacKiernan was deeply moved by this visit from a friend from the Oratory. The last months of his life were marked by the affection of the poor to whom he had dedicated his life. They called in leaving him little delicacies to eat. He died at 3.00p.m. on December 30th 1888 after receiving Communion for the last time. According to the account in the *Bollettino Salesiano*.

People from the parish came to visit this young priest whom they loved and revered, men well on in years were seen to fall on their knees praying before that corpse, then to embrace it and depart sobbing as if one of their own sons had died.<sup>43</sup>

This ability to express their feelings, and their solidarity as a community in the face of death, had greatly impressed Mrs. Charlotte Despard in her work among the Battersea Irish, so much so that she embraced their faith. MacKiernan certainly had shared the lives and poverty of his flock, even the costs of his funeral had to be borne by the neighbouring parish priest, Fr Connolly. However, Fr Galeran, a close friend to the end should have the last word.

His death will be a loss and a gain, we lose a worthy priest but at the same time the grain falls into the ground for the growing period. There is no better foundation stone than the stone which is the tomb of a priest and religious...<sup>44</sup>

As early as their first year in England, the Salesian community were already making clear the lines upon which they were later to develop. High on their list of priorities must have been to find some way of maintaining themselves financially. Unlike the Salesian work abroad, the parish appeared to present an central focus for the mission of the community, but

<sup>43</sup> *Bollettino Salesiano* (Torino, 1889) March, 1889.

<sup>44</sup> ASC. 3558. A8, A9, A10. H.D. Galeran - Rua (11 Nov. 1888): "Sa mort sera une perte et un gain; nous perdrons un digne Prêtre et ami, mais le grain tombera dans le terre pour il germer. Il n'y a pas de meilleure première pierre qu'une pierre qui est le tombeau d'un prêtre et religieux!"

what appears to be lacking is any clear commitment to young people, either in the form of an Oratory, orphanage or technical school. What does very quickly appear are the first signs of a College or boarding school to foster vocations to the priesthood; youth work which developed almost exclusively into secondary boarding schools for boys as the years went on.

The need and ability to adapt to prevailing circumstances of the place and time obviously affect the development of a religious order. The heroic death of one of its first members was, no doubt, both a tragic blow and yet a heartening example, raising the morale of the founding group. Yet one cannot help but wonder if there was not a danger of the order's particular gift [charism] or mission being obscured if not abandoned in the process.



## THE YEARS OF GROWTH 1889-1898

There is one house here, yet in ten years, the Salesians will be more numerous here, than in any other country outside Italy. (Fr C.B. Macey, 1894)

### Don Rua and Fr MacKiernan's successor

Fr MacKiernan's death left Battersea bereft of a Superior. Although two new Salesians had joined the community in the first year, Fr Bonavia and the sub-deacon Eugenio Rabagliati, still, there was only one priest, Fr Charles B. Macey, who could speak English with any assurance.

Soon after the confirmation of Fr MacKiernan's death, Don Rua wrote to Fr Macey,

You are left somewhat frightened of having the title of Parish Priest, even though you've been discharging all the duties for some months. Let us put all our trust in the Lord and in the protection of Mary Help of Christians, they will not abandon us. If it is the responsibility of having the direction of the house that makes you frightened, it would be easy to arrange matters, leaving to you the office of Parish Priest and to Don Bonavia [scored out were the words 'that of Director' and written in were the words] to help you in the matters regarding the house. Do me the favour of thinking these things over at the feet of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and then write to me letting me know what you think, before I write my letter to the Bishop.<sup>1</sup>

In those significant few lines, Don Rua showed his determination to maintain a native superior for this new house in England, quite against the ordinary Salesian practice elsewhere. In Europe and South America as a rule, Italians and usually Piedmontese were appointed as Superiors. Don Rua's style of leadership also showed an unusual feature in an age of 'blind obedience'. He encouraged Fr Macey to reflect on his own situation before

<sup>1</sup> SDB. GB, Macey Letters (hereafter ML.) Rua - Macey (22 Jan. 1889): "Tu ti lasci alquanto spaventare dal titolo di Parroco, sebbene da parecchi mesi ne disimpegni l'uffizio. Confidiamo nel Signore e nella protezione di M.A. Essi non ci abbandoneranno. Se poi fosse la direzione della casa che ti facesse pena, si potrebbe facilmente accomodare la cosa, lasciando a te l'uffizio di Parroco e a D. Bonavia [questo di Direttore] d'ajutarti nelle cose della casa. Favorisci considerar la cosa ai piedi di Gesù Sacramentato e poi scrivermi il tuo parere, prima che si spedisca la lettera al Vescovo."

God and then let Don Rua know what he thought, before he wrote to the Bishop to inform him of the change of Parish Priest and Superior. There is no sign in Don Rua's attitude of the 'creeping infallibility' phenomenon, where the Superior always knew best, which might be associated with the Church after the First Vatican Council.

Don Rua's decision was not without cost; it involved him in programme of personal support and advice which lasted till his death in 1910. He wrote almost 200 letters to Fr Macey during that time and visited England several times, a degree of interest which was extraordinary, given the burdens of running a Society experiencing one of the most rapid and sustained periods of growth in its history. (The numbers in the Society rose from 774 at the death of Don Bosco in 1888 to 4004 professed members at the death of Don Rua in 1910).

### **The years of expansion at Battersea 1889-1902**

The ten years that followed 1889 were marked by rapid expansion in almost all the sectors of the mission at Battersea: the number of nominal Catholics in the parish, levels of church attendance, the number of children in the elementary schools and the number of young men who wanted to become priests all showed such a marked increase that Fr Macey could claim without too much exaggeration in 1894.

There is one house here, yet in ten years, the Salesians will be more numerous here than in any other country outside Italy.<sup>2</sup>

Although the building and consecration of the new Sacred Heart Church in 1893 clearly marked one of the great achievements of the period, at least as significant, in terms of the future development of the work, was the acquiring and extension of Surrey Lodge in 1895, since it became the site of the Salesian College, part seminary, part secondary school.

#### *Statistics of growth*

One of the main features of the development of the Mission at Battersea was the growing number of Catholics it served. According to the Synod returns,<sup>3</sup> the estimated Catholic population had grown from 450 in 1878, to 600 in 1881, to 1500 in 1888 (the first year the Salesians sent in the data) and then to 2300 by 1896, the final year that the figures were

<sup>2</sup> ASC 3558 E4 Macey to Rua (22 April 1894): "Ci dia una casa e in 10 anni i Salesiani saranno più numerosi in Inghilterra che in qualunque paese fuori d'Italia."

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix chapter 5.

recorded. Although these figures represent more the size of the job that the priests felt they had taken on, than the actual numbers attending church, still they provide at least a rough guide to their overall impressions, which were that numbers were expanding rapidly. In Charles Booth's survey of the district in 1900, the interviewer was sceptical of the figures for parishioners and church attendance given him by Fr Hawarden:

The parish adjoins that of Dr. Whereat on the West and includes according to a census made a year or two ago 1000-1100 Catholics. The people are all working class and appear to be scattered all over the district... There are five Masses on a Sunday and the attendance is good averaging 700 or 800, a proportion of the total census that probably points to error or exaggeration somewhere.<sup>4</sup>

The census figures quoted appear to be at least 10 years out of date, and the figures given for Mass attendance would represent a more usual proportion of the 2300 suggested by the Synod returns in 1896.

A more significant guide to expansion were the numbers of Baptisms recorded. They show an extraordinary increase

from 41 baptisms	in 1888
to 139	in 1895
followed by a fall to 100	in 1896
but rising again to 117	in 1902.

These figures would appear to show a real expansion of the Church's influence over many Catholic families who had been previously untouched.

The number of Easter Communion did not show such a radical change, only growing steadily from 300 in 1888 to nearly 500 in 1895, when it surpassed for the first time the figure of 468 that had already been reached in 1881.

This suggests that the proportion of practising Catholics who made their Easter duties remained quite a small part of the total community, though this was probably more generally true than just in Battersea. Children were still, at this period, excluded from Communion till they were at least 12 years of age, explaining to some extent the difference between regular attenders and communicants.

The figures for children in Catholic schools definitely did, however, show a very rapid increase from 165 in 1888 to 506 in 1896. Together with the figures for the number of Baptisms they indicate a genuine growth in the effectively Catholic Community in Battersea. What can be seen also, however, is that there were quite large differences in levels of commitment among the Catholic community from those who had their children baptised

<sup>4</sup> Booth Collection, London School of Economics (hereafter BC.LSE) B295, p. 193ff.

and sent them to the Catholic school yet did not attend Mass themselves, to those who were regularly at Mass, Confession and Communion. In the anonymous urban setting, the phenomenon of disassociation from the Church seemed to have been already well advanced. It is far from being a modern development.

### *Growth factors*

The factors which led to this expansion of the practising community are not easy to identify. Nonetheless, the increase in the number of active clergy and the enthusiasm characteristic of young men, would seem to have had their effect. The number of priests at Battersea rose from nil, when there was no resident priest, after the departure of Fr McKenna, to three in 1888, with the arrival of Fr Bonavia.

Contemporary accounts would suggest that another of the features which attracted large congregations was the splendour of the liturgical services. In a *Universe* article for 1891 the correspondent waxed eloquent on the décor of the Altar of Repose,

...lights of various colours were arranged to form tulips of mammoth size. They were interspersed with rare plants and palms that stretched from the floor to the Sacred Urn which stood about 15 feet from the ground. The Silesian [sic] Fathers who spare nothing to make their church services attractive and who have made the most strenuous efforts to draw their people to the sacraments must be highly gratified at the result of their labours.<sup>5</sup>

In the *South London Record* Fr Macey is described as

...the Evangelist and much beloved priest in charge of the Trott St. Mission, who aims at bringing together into social intercourse the worshippers of the little iron church and friends of the Mission and welding them, as far as possible, into one common bond of Christian fellowship... Fr Macey (is trying to raise funds) for the purpose of erecting a more suitable and commodious church for his little but surely increasing flock to worship in... His work lies in almost the poorest district of Battersea and the marvellous strides the Mission has made since it has been under his guidance, speaks volumes for his untiring energy and devotion to its best interests.<sup>6</sup>

Evidently, Fr Macey was not above a little social ecumenism in the cause of raising money for a new church.

<sup>5</sup> ASC 3558 D3 Newspaper cuttings Easter 1891.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

### *The question of the contract*

This growth still had to be placed on a firm legal foundation and the details of the contract were still being decided in March 1889. Through Fr Macey, Bishop Butt confirmed his willingness to formally cede the parish to the Trustees of the Society, on terms decided by the general legislation. He concluded:

I have no right to make conditions of that type [as to who was to be Parish Priest] regarding the parish of West Battersea. I am, therefore, ready to cede it at any time to the trustees of the Congregation. Wishing you every blessing, I am, yours sincerely in Christ,

† John Butt.<sup>7</sup>

The deed was, in fact, in the hands of the lawyers by the middle of April 1889.<sup>8</sup>

### **The growth of the schools**

The dramatic growth of the numbers of children in the parish elementary school may well have been the result of a measure introduced by Lord Salisbury's Liberal Unionist Government in 1891. This measure introduced the payment of a per capita grant of 19/- per child in school, which gradually led to the abolition of school fees.<sup>9</sup> According to the school log books, the Old Battersea RC Girls and Infants' School opened on September 8th 1879, and obtained official government recognition on March 1st 1880, together with notice of the first Official Inspection for March of the following year. The Boys' School opened on August 29th 1890 with 53 pupils, most of whom came up from the Girls' School.<sup>10</sup> Although there had been compulsory elementary education after Mundella's Act in 1880, it was still not free so as a result, the poor did everything possible to avoid the expense. Even after 1891, the payment of the grant from central government depended on the school's success in the annual examinations held by the Government Inspectors. Hence, Fr Macey reported to Turin that in order to receive the government subsidy, it was necessary to bring the school buildings up to standard:

<sup>7</sup> ASC 3558 B12 Macey to Durando ...Sig. Ispettore. (9.3.89) quoting a letter from Bishop Butt: "...io non ho diritto di fare condizioni di sorta riguardo alla cura di West Battersea. Io sono perciò pronto a cederla in qualunque tempo ai fiduciari della Congregazione. Augurandovi ogni benedizione sono vostro sincer<sup>mo</sup> in Cristo, John Butt."

<sup>8</sup> ASC 3558 C4 Leathery and Phips to Macey (15 April 1889).

<sup>9</sup> J.R. EDWARDS, *British History 1815-1939*, London 1976, p. 223.

<sup>10</sup> Trott St. RC School Log Books, Vol. I Boys.

Several weeks ago, I talked to the architect about what we should do, since recently, a decree about schools has been published. This means that our schools must be just like those of the government (if you want to get the subsidy). He is expert and has prepared a plan with all the necessary declarations and then asked the opinion of 4 competent persons. They must examine them and then agree on an estimate for the cost of the work in question.<sup>11</sup>

The cost of the extensions and modifications was to be £.937, and Fr Macey asked Don Rua what he was to do about such a huge sum. Raising the money from a poor working class congregation was one of the continuing problems of these Missions. In fact, in Wandsworth in 1891, Fr H.D. Galeran, who had helped the Salesians through their early difficulties, found himself £.200 in debt, despite having ploughed his personal savings into the parish. He was cited in the County Court by one of his curates for non-payment of his salary and he was forced by Bishop Butt to resign the Mission.<sup>12</sup> Fr Macey was very lucky to have been able to rely so heavily on Turin to help him out.

In a report on the School Inspector's examination, which Fr Macey passed on to Italy, it would appear that the schools were doing quite well:

The Boys' school which has only been opened as a separate section for six months has already made good progress, reflecting much credit on the teacher. The discipline is excellent and the various classes have achieved most satisfactory exam results.<sup>13</sup>

The general discipline of the school, the level of work in each class and the subjects where the children showed special competence were all detailed. They suggested an overall picture of a busy, well organised school, with a fairly strong emphasis on communal achievements and standards; thus, public group recitations are commended. This style of overall group inspection and the 'payment by results', though it is often criticised, must have created a degree of communal interest both within the school and from the Catholic community. This would have acted as an excellent counterweight to the centrifugal economic forces which dominated a poor

<sup>11</sup> ASC. 3558 C7 and ff: "Alcune settimane fa parlai con l'architetto sul da farsi, essendo di recente uscito un decreto sulle scuole che devono essere come quelle del governo se si vuole averle governative, cioè se si vuole avere il sussidio; ed egli, pratico, fece il disegno con tutte le dichiaraz. necessarie, e poi lo diede a 4 competenti perché esaminato ben bene, gli dicessero per quanto potevano fare il detto lavoro."

<sup>12</sup> SAA Wandsworth File: Fr Galeran, Bp. Butt Correspondence 1891.

<sup>13</sup> ASC 3558 dà: Boys' School 1891: "La Scuola dei ragazzi, come sezione separata, fu aperta solo da sei mesi e fece di già assai buon progresso riflettendo molto credito sul maestro. La disciplina è eccellente, e le varie classi hanno passato un soddisfacentissimo esame."



district like Battersea, where casual labour was often the only form of employment.

Another feature which certainly helped to popularise the school and broadened the educational approach was the type of Christmas celebration described by Fr Bonavia in January 1889. One of the original features of the occasion was that it was sponsored by 'a most pious and charitable lady', Mrs. Henry Whiting, wife of a local wealthy retailer, as part of the celebrations for her daughter's 21st birthday. [A custom which Lady Turner, as she became, continued right up till 1913.]<sup>14</sup> The idea of having a sponsor or 'patron of the feast' was one that Don Bosco commonly used at the Oratory, both as a means of paying for such celebrations, as well as a way of thanking and encouraging his benefactors.

A most pious and charitable lady, Mrs Henry Whiting aimed at making the Christmas period pass by more joyfully for the girls and boys who frequent these schools where, as you know, they are taught so well, with rare zeal and expertise by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur... When the day fixed, the 11th of January came round, a large space in the school was transformed as well as possible into a theatre. In the middle of the orchestra pit towered a beautiful Christmas tree, on and around which were gracefully placed a beautiful show of more than four hundred presents, toys adapted to the age and condition (of the children).<sup>15</sup>

The pantomime and concert performed by the children were a great success, and these were followed by a tea and giving out of the presents. Events like this would undoubtedly have helped to increase the numbers of children anxious to attend the school.

The presence and expertise of the sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in the Girls and Infants' School obviously impressed Fr Bonavia. Their convent and secondary school were situated beside the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Joseph at Battersea East, so their pioneering work among Battersea's poor extended to both parts of Battersea and helped to establish the high standards commented on by the Inspectors, which certainly added to the confidence that parents could have in the school.

<sup>14</sup> *Chronicle of the House of the Sacred Heart, London, Battersea S.W.* (Salesian College, Surrey Lane, Battersea. House Archive.) (hereafter Batt. Chron.) Entry for Feb. 2nd 1913.

<sup>15</sup> ASC 3558 B8, B9. Don Bonavia to Sig. Direttore (14 Jan. 1889): "Una piissima e caritatevole Signora, Mrs Henry Whiting, disegnavo far trascorrere più lieto il Natale ai ragazzi e ragazze che frequentano queste scuole, dove, come le è noto, insegnano con lode di raro zelo e perizia le suore di Notre Dame di Namur [...] Venne fissato il giorno 11 gennaio. Un'ampia scuola fu trasformata il meglio possibile in teatro. In mezzo alla platea grandeggiava un bell'albero di Natale, sopra ed intorno graziosamente disposti in bella mostra più di quattrocento regali, balocchi scelti adattati all'età e condizione..."



The growth of the school and the Mission was no doubt interdependent. Part of the work the clergy saw themselves doing was to visit families encouraging parents to send their children to the Catholic school, where they would receive some formal Religious Education and an induction into the sacramental life of the Church.

The complications of administering the school and the Government Subsidy encouraged Fr Macey to rely on Fr Connolly, the Parish priest at Battersea East. One of his worries was how to reply to the intricate questions of the government administration.

With regard to this, as in all the other embarrassments, Fr Connolly comes to our aid, and takes away the bother of reviewing and arranging accounts, papers and registers and then of putting everything in order, as it should be. [To this end], he takes it all to a lawyer of his acquaintance and whom he pays for us. We cannot really thank this sincere and true friend enough for so many kindnesses.<sup>16</sup>

### **The growth of vocations**

One of the most striking features of the early years at Battersea was the startling growth in the number of Salesians, from 3 to 37 by 1898. This dramatic growth in numbers was due, in large part, to the intake of English vocations. There were a number of boys and young men who came to stay with the Salesian community at Battersea, sometimes to avoid a dangerous background at home and then, later, began to study for the priesthood. Fr Bonavia had early on noted the possibility of vocations even in Battersea. He described how assiduous the boys were in coming to serve Mass and commented that even though they came from backgrounds, often, far from good, some of them had expressed the desire to become priests.<sup>17</sup> It was this dual need, to provide a stable Catholic background and to encourage vocations to the priesthood, that persuaded that tiny community to open their doors to them.

The very first of these to be accepted as a student for the priesthood was John Pash, the eldest son of the widow Mary Pash (in whose home the early Salesians had eaten their first meal in Battersea). In August 1888, he had left his job as a pupil-teacher at the School of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, East Battersea to pursue his studies for the priesthood with the new

<sup>16</sup> ASC 3558 C2 Macey to Durando Sig. Ispettore (9.3.1889): "Da questo come in tutti gli altri imbarazzi mi soccorse Padre Connolly che si tolse la briga di rivedere e accomodare conti, carte e registri e poi per mettere tutto in ordine come si conveniva, portò tutto da un avvocato di sua conoscenza e che pagò per noi. Davvero, non potremo ringraziare abbastanza questo sincero e vero amico per tante cortesie."

<sup>17</sup> ASC. 3557 Rua E10, Bonavia to Rua.

community.<sup>18</sup> However, just after the death of Fr MacKiernan, the boy took ill and so short were they of space that he had to be put in the same bed that Fr MacKiernan had just died in. The House Chronicle, in an early entry, records the story:

The young man John Pash was taken to St. George's Hospital. He remained there a month and a day. He died about eight o'clock on the evening of March 24th (1888) in the arms of his brother Thomas Pash. He was a very model youth in every respect, of the best disposition and the brightest hope. While at the hospital he fulfilled his practices of piety most exactly and by his resignation and deep religious spirit he edified all the sick Protestants around him. RIP.<sup>19</sup>

But John's was not the only vocation that was encouraged. His eldest sister Mary Pash, became the first English Salesian Sister, working as a seamstress in Battersea and later in the USA. All the other daughters of Mrs Pash, except Agnes, likewise became sisters in different congregations so that the idea of a vocation in the service of the Church seemed to have become a very real option in Battersea, with the coming of that first Salesian Community.

The original Community consisted of Frs MacKiernan, and Macey and the coadjutor brother Rossaro. Fr Juvenal Bonavia also joined them on September 18th, having travelled with Fr MacKiernan from Italy, when he returned after his retreat. The sub-deacon Eugenio Rabagliati likewise came to Battersea on October 12th, when Fr Macey returned from his retreat. After the death of John Pash, the community welcomed two new aspirants, Charles Buss and Ernest Goddard, on the January 3rd 1890. Buss was sent to Italy for his retreat and Novitiate in September of that year. On the other hand, Goddard somewhat embarrassed the chronicler by fleeing from the community, with some outside companions on the June Bank holiday and after succumbing to 'various temptations', he came to a 'sudden and unprovoked end', in the following February at the Woolwich Barracks.<sup>20</sup>

When Buss was sent to Italy, Fr Macey sent a covering letter about him and another German aspirant, who had been resident in Battersea:

Here enclosed as you see there is a testimonial which is for a young man who will come for the Retreat at Valsalice. He has lived here in England for several years for his studies, but he is, however, a native of Germany.

<sup>18</sup> Batt. Chron. Aug. 1888.

<sup>19</sup> SDB. GB. J. NOONAN, unpublished history of the province, *Don Bosco's England*, Part I, p. 96. Noonan was one of the early students at Battersea and while he unashamedly intended to write a hagiographical account of his boyhood years and had little or no access to original documents, still where his personal memories are involved they are valuable. His work was finished on 31 Jan. 1948 but was felt to be too hagiographic particularly in his portraits of the founding members to be published.

<sup>20</sup> Batt. Chron. Jan 3rd, 1890; June 1890; Feb. 1891.

At the moment he is with his relations in Germany, but I hope he will be in Turin for the first retreat. Also Charles Buss will be there for the first Retreat.<sup>21</sup>

Buss, whose family lived in the Battersea Parish<sup>22</sup> completed his training in Italy and came back to Battersea after his ordination.

The number of Salesians had grown from 3 in 1888 to 37 in England in 1898 with another 5 in Cape Town which was founded from Battersea. Although it is true that the ranks of the Salesians had been swelled by several additions from abroad; Fr Arts from Belgium, Fr Barni from Italy [who became the first Rector in Cape Town], and Fr Aeneas Tozzi, who became the Novice Master in succession to Fr Bonavia, yet, the main part of the growth was due to an influx of English and Irish boys to the Society.

Some account of what caused this growth must be given. They were probably attracted by the fact that this group of priests were open to receiving them into their home, and also by the encouragement they received to take a full part in Church services and other activities; Fr Rabagliati's work as a choir master is still a living legend in the parish at Battersea. Moreover, under the direction of Fr Bonavia, the Salesians had begun to attempt to provide some form of secondary education and, perhaps, just as significantly, they made it possible for the youngsters to feel themselves to be part of a wider international community, founded by a saintly man like Don Bosco. A vocation to the priesthood or religious life provided young people with a worthy and respected role in society and with the Salesians, wider international horizons than were normally conceivable in an area like Battersea. All this was offered without any demand for fees, an unusual circumstance when the traditional Catholic seminaries still charged their students.

Among the early aspirants, were Daniel McCarthy who came from Ireland and was received on Aug. 13th 1890. He was followed by Aloysius Hawarden from Manchester in November 1890 and Ernest Blackborrow in May 1891. John McCourt, William Kelly, Michael McCarthy, Bernard Hopper and William Jeffrey all received the cassock between 1890 and 1893.<sup>23</sup> While their place of birth is recorded in the registers, it is not

<sup>21</sup> ASC 3558 C10, C11. Macey to Rua (7 July 1890): "Qui inchiuso, come vede, v'è un attestato che è per un giovane che verrà agli esercizi spirituali a Valsalice. È stato qui in Inghilterra parecchi anni per i suoi studi, ma però è nativo di Germania. Ora egli si trova coi suoi parenti in Germania ma spero si troverà a Torino pei primi esercizi spirituali [Io lo conosco e gli ho parlato a lungo, le informazioni sono buone come può vedere dall'attestato del superiore del collegio, e quindi spero diventerà un buon Salesiano]. Anche C. Buss si troverà pei primi esercizi..."

<sup>22</sup> See the two Buss entries in Baptismal Register for 1880, Appendix to Ch. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Batt. Chron. 1890-1893.

possible to tell whether they or their parents had moved to Battersea prior to their joining. The parish church gradually began to take on the aspect of a seminary and the dinginess of the corrugated iron chapel in the Battersea back streets was often transfigured by the splendour and singing of Solemn High Mass and Solemn Vespers.

Fr Macey also planned to train these aspirants by using the 'Pupil-Teacher' apprentice system then in use for training teachers.

...Now for the moment, I thought that it would be a good thing to take 3 youngsters of 14 years of age, who have a vocation to the priesthood and to put them immediately into the new school as pupil-teachers. They will take an exam in October and another in March and if they pass, they can teach. Therefore, my idea is that these youngsters will take all the exams, so that after a few years, they will have, the Teachers' Diploma.

Meanwhile, they would be able to study Latin in the evenings and when they have finished their studies and taken their Diploma, they would be able to go to Italy for their novitiate. I think I'll be able to find three suitable boys.<sup>24</sup>

Among the first to be thus trained were Bernard Hopper, John McCourt, William Kelly, Michael McCarthy, John Noonan, Walter Austen, and later Aloysius Sutherland.<sup>25</sup> In February 1894 Hopper, having passed the initial exams, commenced his course at the Training College at Hammersmith.<sup>26</sup>

### **More accommodation**

Very soon, the growing numbers of aspirants required the acquisition of extra property. At first the Salesians had rented a house at 24 Trott St. while Fr Bourne continued to lodge with Mrs Pash at number 26. They next rented a house in High St., though there is a degree of disagreement among the early witnesses as to whether it was number 124 or 126.

<sup>24</sup> ASC 3558. C11, C12, D1. Macey to Rua (7 July 1890): "...ora ho pensato che sarebbe buona cosa di prendere 3 giovani di 14 anni che hanno una vocazione al sacerdozio, e metterli subito nella nuova scuola come, 'pupil-teachers'. Essi prenderanno un esame in Ottobre e un altro in Marzo, e se passano possono insegnare. Dunque la mia idea è, che questi giovani prendano tutti gli esami, per avere dopo pochi anni la diploma di maestro. Essi intanto potrebbero studiare Latino alla sera, e quando hanno terminato i loro studi, e preso la diploma potrebbero andare in Italia pel noviziato. Mi pare che posso trovare 3 giovani adattati."

<sup>25</sup> Trott St. RC School Log Book Boys School Vol. I records the following as pupil teachers taken on at the following dates: William Kelly Jan. 16th 1890; Bernard Hopper 25th April 1891; John McCourt, 23 Sept. 1891; Walter Austen Oct. 1893; John Noonan, 1895 and Bernard Hopper becomes the School Master in 1896 in place of John Barry the first School Master.

<sup>26</sup> Batt. Chron.: Feb. 1894; Jan. 1893.

Finally, on December 8th 1889 they acquired 62-64 Orbel St on a long lease from the Church Commissioners and moved in on the feast of St Francis of Sales, January 29th, 1890. When this proved too cramped they also took over the houses next door called Warwick Villas, 58-60 Orbel St. These houses were built along a small cul-de-sac which gave access from a blacksmith's forge to Orbel St. and which had become a regular meeting place for a group of what Fr Noonan called 'loafers' in the evening. Fr Macey discovered that legally, if he owned the Blacksmith's shop, he could close the access at the Orbel St. end. This he proceeded to do, by having a wall built. According to Fr J.F. Noonan's story, this led to a furious row in which supposedly, one of the Battersea councillors, a very irascible man, actually attempted to knock the half built wall down, with his bare hands.

He (Fr Macey) patiently and kindly advised the man to go home and not to do anything he might regret. The man left breathing fire and thunder, and threatening all sorts of dire consequences on the priests. He arrived home and fell dead on his own doorstep within half an hour of the incidents recorded.<sup>27</sup>

Fr Noonan had come to the Salesians as an aspirant in 1893 and this incident would have appeared to have taken place during that year. This occurrence seemed to have considerably impressed him as a boy and no doubt contributed to the young aspirant's sense of the closeness of the supernatural. The Battersea Chronicle remarks that the Vestry demanded that the wall be knocked down but that, through the saintly intercession of Don Bosco, it was left undisturbed.<sup>28</sup>

The final and most significant move was the acquiring of Surrey Lodge on July 10th 1895. In June of the previous year Fr Macey had informed the Superiors that

The owner of the ground died several weeks ago and the heirs intend to sell the property in order to get their share of the inheritance.<sup>29</sup>

The price quoted was £.4700, which seemed a reasonable price to Fr Macey for property in London, but which was far beyond the resources of the Mission itself. Don Rua managed to persuade a wealthy clergyman, the Rev. Anthony Cauvin, who lived at Nice in the South of France, to lend this sum to the Society on very advantageous terms. He wrote to Fr Macey three times in early 1895 assuring him of the required loan:

At any rate, be sure, I will, at the cost of some sacrifice, procure the L.4000 to send him (Don Rua).<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> SDB. GB., J. NOONAN, *op. cit.*, Part I, p. 38.

<sup>28</sup> Batt. Chron.: July 10, 1895.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>30</sup> SDB. GB. Rev. Anthony Cauvin to Fr Macey ...Rev. Sir. (3 March 1895).

Fr Noonan's record of the move is almost lyrical:

That journey (from Surrey Lodge to Orbel Street through the newly acquired property on 10 July 1895) seemed a very long one to us who had been cooped up for so many years in so small a place, as the crabbed surroundings of Orbel St. We felt we were going through quite an enormous estate. We wandered past the stables through the woods, past a lawn and came to a lovely kitchen garden, full of many vegetables. Skirting the low pailing all along the back of Orbel St., we gazed in wonder at the mysteries of back gardens, many of which we had never imagined to have existed in that street.<sup>31</sup>

The first night the Salesians spent in Surrey Lodge was not without incident, as the two students sent to occupy the house found their slumbers disturbed by a strange humming noise coming from the cellars:

The place seemed to be possessed by demons or some very peculiar beings. One of the clerics struck a light. O horror! To their astonishment the floor was literally covered with black beetles.<sup>32</sup>

Once the beetles had been driven out by dint of carbolic soap and Fr Barni's blessing, Surrey Lodge was adapted as the Community House and centre for the boarding secondary school or College which was gradually taking shape. The original plans were drawn up by Mr Frederick Jones for a school separate from the house, to be built in the grounds. In fact, as an economy measure, two wings were added to Surrey House itself, on the site of a conservatory on one side, and towards the stables, on the other. These provided classrooms and dormitory space for the community and 110 boarders. A domestic chapel was soon created out of the old stables and the College became effectively a completely separate unit from the Mission or Parish from which it had begun. This tendency towards separating the main community from the parish was to become more pronounced as time went on. The parish tended to be the sole preoccupation of one priest, and the community tended to restrict their attention to the occupants of the school, most of whom boarded.

One of Booth's interviewers confirmed this tendency for the Salesians to concentrate on the school. As part of his survey, he sought an interview with Fr Macey who, it appears, was unwilling to talk to him, but

Fr Harradon (sic) had been instructed to give me one or two figures and tried to run away the moment he had done so. But we talked for a few minutes and I felt quite sorry for him, all the time he so obviously felt that he was exceeding his instructions... The parish adjoins that of Dr.

<sup>31</sup> SDB. Gb., J. NOONAN, Part I, p. 82.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.



Whereat on the West and includes according to a census made a year or two ago 1000-1100 Catholics (a figure the researcher found unlikely)... The people were, he thinks, tending to get poorer and he spoke of the influx quite recently of a lower class from the other side of the river. On the social conditions of the district, however, the opinions of Fr Harrodon would not have any special merit as most of his time is taken up in the school, education being the special work of the Salesian Order.

This impression is further confirmed when he came to speak of the schools:

The schools are important and include a Middle Class school. The total regular attendance was put at 600 pupils and these were said to include a certain number of non-catholics. They have 109 boys in attendance (boarders)... There are 7 priests, "and all" as implied above are working not in the parish but rather in the school.

The interviewer also made an interesting comment on the relative positions of Fr Macey and Fr Hawarden who had received him.

They have no convent attached and no sisters to help in the work. Very little lay help is to be had. I wish we had, there is much need, all my time is taken up with answering the door and when he said that Fr Harrodon felt he had almost gone too far; he was afraid he must go and ran away. He was a rather timid creature, rather like an overworked second-rate usher in a cassock. He had been there for about 8 years.<sup>33</sup>

This none too complimentary picture would seem at least to confirm that the focus of the Salesians' attention had become the 'Middle Class' or secondary boy's school, and that contact with outsiders, even the people of the district, was not encouraged by Fr Macey.

The question which must surely be raised is what sort of school did the early Salesians have in mind to develop. We have seen that at first, the idea of a school for those boys who would wish to train for the priesthood was very much in their minds and this found expression in an article that appeared in the Salesian Bulletin in 1895:

Now the Lodge is ready to answer the purpose for which it was bought namely a school for boys who intend going on for the priesthood and for whom other establishments are inaccessible. The aim of the Salesians whilst preparing those boys for the priesthood, whether secular or regular, is to follow a syllabus which will enable those who do not feel called to the ecclesiastical state, to enter upon any career they choose. Pupils are prepared for the College of Preceptors Examination, for the Oxford and Cambridge Locals and even for London University.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> BC.LSE, B295, p. 193ff.

<sup>34</sup> *The Chronicle of the English Province (SDB.GB)* Sept. 15th 1895, p. 13.



There is no doubt that the pressure to run Colleges both for students who would prepare for the priesthood and those who would not was the foundation on which the Salesians came to base their contribution to secondary education in this country. The search for recognised qualifications was already quite advanced and in the *Chronicle of the English Province* the exam results play a major part each year.

The other strand in the traditional Salesian work, i.e. working for orphans and the disadvantaged, appears in the *Salesian Bulletin* a couple of years later, 1897, when an appeal is being made for funds for a new wing of the School at Battersea to be built.

The Orphanage attached to the Church and Mission of the Sacred Heart is now as full as it possibly can be. Every available space has been taken advantage of and petitions for admission still come pouring in. England is rich but Catholic England is poor. At Battersea we are surrounded by a seething poverty stricken mass of men and women, each fighting in the weary struggle for bare existence.<sup>35</sup>

### Catholic secondary education

The origins of English Catholic secondary education date back to the Reformation, when the need to train priests for the Mission inspired the foundation of the Seminary Colleges at Douai and elsewhere abroad. Their aim was to prepare priests, though some lay boys were accepted, so that they maintained a somewhat restricted 'classical style' of education appropriate for candidates for the priesthood and lay students who would devote themselves to gentlemanly pursuits on their estates. Even after their return to England at the French Revolution, the pattern remained much the same, whether in the colleges run by the seculars at Ushaw and Old Hall, or in those run by the religious at Stonyhurst, Downside, or Ampleforth. Somewhat like the great English Public Schools, they catered for the sons of the gentry, and candidates for the learned professions.

W.J. Battersby, in his essay on *Secondary Education for Boys* summarised the need for a new approach thus,

After visiting schools abroad, Matthew Arnold's opinion was that, our middle classes are nearly the worst educated in the world.

The demand was for cheap schools with a curriculum of "modern studies" as opposed to the costly Public Schools with their "classical" education. The problem for Catholics and non-Catholics alike was to supply these requirements at a time when no help of any kind could be expected from the State. For Catholics, there was only one possibility.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. April 15th, 1897.

Since the efforts of the clergy and laity were wholly directed towards maintaining the elementary schools, the provision of secondary education had perforce to come from the Religious Orders. These alone, thanks to the vow of Poverty of their members and the pooling of resources by a centralised administration, were in a position to shoulder the serious financial burden of setting up schools where the low fees would yield little or no profit to cover initial outlay.<sup>36</sup>

The first of these to be set up in 1855 was the De La Salle boarding and day school at Clapham. By 1870, there was the nucleus of a system of Catholic secondary schools, which differed in one important respect from the curriculum used in ordinary grammar schools:

...English grammar and composition, geography, history and physical science, receive much attention; "fancy classics" as they are sometimes called, are discarded.<sup>37</sup>

Parallel to the development of these Catholic secondary schools was the institution of public examinations. The College of Preceptors began to examine pupils and award certificates in 1850, the Oxford and Cambridge Locals in 1857 and London University emerged as an examining body for external students in 1858. These so called "Middle Class Examinations" not only became an incentive to uniform standards and hard work; they were soon also required for entry to the Indian civil service and the Royal Military College at Woolwich.<sup>38</sup>

Given the demand for middle class education in England and the prevailing power of an examination system to shape the curriculum, given also the Salesians' financial weakness and their concern for vocations, it is little wonder that their main, if not their only form of work became the secondary boarding and day school for boys. The particular Salesian tradition of technical education was largely ignored, since it did not fit the mould of the 'Middle Class examinations', or one suspects the 'gentlemanly image' that Fr Macey was concerned to cultivate. Such schools could charge low fees and yet maintain a working community of priests and at the same time provide almost free secondary schooling for candidates for the priesthood.

<sup>36</sup> W.J. BATTERSBY, *Secondary Education for Boys*, in G.A. BECK, *The English Catholics*, London, 1956, p. 328.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 329.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 329.

## **Building the Sacred Heart Church**

The crowning achievement of that first decade of growth was the building of the Sacred Heart Church in place of the Countess's iron chapel. It had been obvious to Don Dalmazzo from the outset that repairing the iron chapel could only be an interim measure; what was needed was a new church. Fr Macey had tried to collect money for this purpose, but it was soon clear that his poor parishioners could not afford to build one on their own. The final decision to build a new church in London had to be made in Turin, from where the money would have to come, but not without considerable heart-searching. The Superiors in Turin were very concerned about the clauses in the contract with the Bishop that denied religious orders any compensation for improvements they carried out in their churches, should they have to leave the parish.<sup>39</sup>

Don Rua's visit to London seemed to have convinced him of the need which he explained to the Superiors on his return<sup>40</sup> in the summer of 1890. In September 1891, Fr Macey went to Italy and took with him designs for the new church, hoping to bring the negotiations to a conclusion. They decided on one which was simple and not too costly. In November 1891, Don Durando sent Fr Macey the approved design and Macey wrote to thank him:

I have just received your very dear letter with the plan. With regard to assuring ourselves of the property, this is what the Bishop says; the land is ours and no one can take it away from us, but it must always remain a parish. Supposing we were to buy the ground to build a church, we must do it under the same conditions as above for the land for the church. It is the same for all, the Servites, the Jesuits and all the religious orders, they cannot make foundations here except under the same conditions. Nor can the bishop change in any way the deed already made. We have come to take care of the parish. If we cannot do this we must move away. But if we stay then, we need to build the church and this church must always be the parish church... As I see it the only way (to build the church) is to make an appeal now in all the Bulletins, as was done for Rome and elsewhere.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> ASC. 0592 Verbali del Capitolo Superiore (1 Agosto 1889).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, (5 June 1890).

<sup>41</sup> ASC 3558 D6, D7, D9. Macey to Durando (14 Nov. 1891): "Ho ricevuto la sua carissima col disegno [...]. Per riguardo all'assicurarsi della proprietà ecco ciò che dice il Vescovo. Il terreno è nostro e nessun ce lo toglierà, però bisogna che vi sia sempre parrocchia. Supponendo che noi comprassimo il campo per fabbricarci una chiesa, dovremmo farla sotto le medesime condizioni come sopra il terreno della chiesa. È così per tutti, Serviti, Gesuiti, e tutti gli ordini religiosi. Non possono fondarsi qui eccetto sotto quelle condizioni. Il vescovo non può cambiare in nulla lo strumento già fatto. Siamo venuti per prendere cura della

In February of the following year, Don Rua was in Rome and went to dine with the Countess de Stackpoole and according to the Battersea chronicler, to please her, he decided to change the design and adopt that of the Church of St John the Evangelist in Turin. This would account for the grand style in which the Salesians decided to build the Sacred Heart Church in Battersea.<sup>42</sup>

### Laying the foundation stone

The ceremony of laying the foundation stone for the new Church took place on the 3rd of August 1892, in the presence of Bishop Butt. It was reported in *The Catholic Times*:

Designed in the Romanesque style of the twelfth century... it will resemble as far as the limited area of the site and the difference of climate will allow the important Church of St John the Evangelist in Turin... The well known Galilee Chapel of the Cathedral of Durham affords the most characteristic example of this style of architecture...<sup>43</sup>

In order to pay for this rather grand conception, Don Rua had made an appeal for funds as Macey suggested in the *Salesian Bulletin* which was the international newsletter of the Salesian Cooperators:

The chapel of wood and iron which was serving up till now as a parish church has become insufficient for the ever increasing numbers numbers of faithful. Having realised this moreover: the Authorities of this capital city will no longer allow us to function in such a chapel but demand that we should construct one in brick or stone, and on the other hand since no significant contributions can be expected there, where Catholic institutions are all weighed down with debts as everyone knows, and where they are right in the midst of a Protestant population, one can hardly say how necessary our work is.<sup>44</sup>

The question of how the money was raised to pay for the Church has never

parrocchia. Se noi non possiamo far questo, bisogna che andassimo via. Ma fermanoci qui, bisogna fabbricare la chiesa, e questa chiesa dev'essere sempre parrocchia... Secondo me, l'unico modo è di fare un appello ora in tutti i Bolettini come fu fatto per Roma ed altrove."

<sup>42</sup> Batt. Chron. Feb. 1892.

<sup>43</sup> ASC 3557 D12. From *The Catholic Times* (5 Aug. 1892).

<sup>44</sup> *Bollettino Salesiano*, Jan. 1892, Torino, 1892, p. 3: "La Cappella di legno e ferro che serviva fin qui di chiesa parrocchiale è divenuta insufficiente pel numero sempre crescente dei fedeli. Avvi di più, le Autorità di quella Capitale non permettono più che si funzioni in simile Chiesuola, ma pretendono che se ne costruisca una in muratura, e per altra parte vano è sperar notevoli soccorsi là dove le opere cattoliche son tutte onerate di debiti come ognun sa, e dove pure in mezzo ai protestanti non è a dire quanto sia necessaria l'opera nostra."

been settled. It was traditionally believed that the inheritance of Fr August Czartoryski paid for it though there is no reference to this in any of the extant documents. After a considerable struggle against his father's wishes, Augustus entered the Oratory and received the clerical habit on the 24 July 1887. Though he had attained his majority, he required permission from the Emperor of Austria to resign his inheritance and embrace the religious life. Even the Pope, Leo XIII, tried to persuade him at least, to join a more prestigious religious order like the Jesuits, but finally gave the young man his blessing. From his own fortune he paid for an extension to the College at Valsalice for Polish boys and another at Lombriasco. His early death in 1892 would have made it possible that his personal fortune should come to the Society. However, apart from the fact that there is a stained glass window in the church with the family crest and motto on it and an oral tradition which is difficult to account for, there appears to be no documentary evidence for this claim.<sup>45</sup>

Another reason for building the church which was suggested in the *Bulletin* was the danger of other religions attracting Catholics, and hence it was suggested that there was a real need for a new church:

You know well how grave is the need and how necessary it is for us to have a bulding suitable for Catholic worship in this most populous borough, already too well provided with temples, chapels and rooms of sects of every hue.<sup>46</sup>

Other reasons given in a series of articles which appeared all through 1892 and 1893 were that they would be contributing to the conversion of England. Like the Roman Empire of old, the British Empire, centred on London, held the key to the rapid spread of the Faith throughout the world. The other idea was that this church would contribute to the Salesian work of looking after young apprentices and bringing them up as good workers free from the dangerous influence of Socialism. These appeals to the generosity of their benefactors must have succeeded, because the Co-operators from Belgium, France and Italy were invited to come for the opening and solemn Consecration of the building in October 1893. A programme of events was planned beginning on Saturday 14th October and lasting till the following Wednesday, involving Bishop Butt, Fr Francis Bourne, now Rector of the diocesan Seminary at Womersley and other notable preachers. From the Salesian Superiors, Don Rua, the Superior

<sup>45</sup> Prince August Czartoryski, MB Vol. XVIII, pp. 467, 514.

<sup>46</sup> *Bollettino Salesiano*, Sept. 1892, Torino, 1892, p. 176: "Ella, cui è ben noto il gravissimo bisogno, anzi necessità, in cui ci troviamo di un edificio adatto al culto per i cattolici di questo popolosissimo borgo, troppo ben fornito di templi, cappelle, sale di sette d'ogni colore."

General, Don Giulio Barberis, Don Albera and Bishop John Cagliero all made their way to London for the celebrations.

Fr Barberis wrote a humorous account of what turned out to be a not uneventful journey:

At eleven o'clock we left for England. The departure had a special style, worthy of us. Mgr. Cagliero did not have the money for his journey from Paris to London. I did not have any. Fr Albera who had just arrived from Marseilles did not have any. The Rector of the house, Don Ronchail, didn't have any. He searched the Prefect's department from office to office and still found nothing. What were we to do? Without money, they wouldn't give us tickets at the station. We did not have time to leave Paris, or to go round looking for a benefactor for it would take at least half a day to make a couple of visits.

Fr Ronchail then went looking in a nearby house for a loan from a good and well known lady, ...(she provided it) only regretting she could not make it a gift as she had a family. They then sent a boy to look for a cab and confidently expected him to return with one, but half an hour later he returned with the news that he could not find one.

...There was no time to lose. We went on foot, but were so late that even Mgr. had to run. The train arrived while we were still a hundred yards away and Mgr. at least three hundred, having run less than we had. At that, even he took to running at a forced pace and finished by jumping on to the train just before the whistle.<sup>47</sup>

The Solemn Consecration was performed by Mgr. Cagliero because Bishop Butt was unwell. The various celebration Masses and international gathering of Co-operators and benefactors showed how important the Salesians understood this to be. One of the preachers, Fr P. Fletcher, himself a convert and head of the Guild of our Lady of Ransom, a confraternity for the conversion of England, stressed the need for Catholics to see themselves as being on the Mission:

<sup>47</sup> ASC 9. 124 [Old numbering]. Barberis to Piscetta. Il viaggio a Londra e Belgio (13 Oct.-2 Nov. 1893): "Alle undici si parti per l'Inghilterra. La partenza ebbe una particolarità degna di noi. Mons. Cagliero non aveva i denari del viaggio da Parigi a Londra; io non li aveva, D. Albera che era arrivato da Marsiglia non li aveva; il direttore della casa, Don Ronchail non ne aveva. Fece cercare in prefettura, in un ufficio, nell'altro, non si trovarono in nessun modo. Come fare? Senza denari alla stazione non danno i biglietti: uscire per Parigi a cercarli da qualche benefattore non vi era tempo, poiché ci vuole almeno mezza giornata per poter fare un paio di visite [...]. Non vi era tempo da perdere; si andò a piedi; ma era tardissimo ed anche Monsignore dovette correre. Arriva il treno e noi eravamo ancora a cento passi e monsignore almeno a trecento essendo corso meno di noi. Allora anch'egli prende la corsa forzata e si finisce per saltare ancora sul treno prima che fischiassero."



It is true that the Protestants have ruined splendid Catholic Churches, yet remembering that God himself has pardoned and forgiven our great debt in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, and remembering too, that Protestants, however far away, are still our brothers in Christ, the esteemed Orator encouraged the Catholics not to imitate the wicked servant of the Gospel but to pray and work to bring them to the truth.<sup>48</sup>

The Church of the Sacred Heart was seen as a centre for bringing the Catholic Church to the people of London.

Its decoration was paid for by some notable benefactors. The high altar, 'a veritable jewel', was the gift of Mrs Henry Whiting. The Lady altar was built in memory of Miss Yates, and one of the side aisles was the gift of Monsieur Haumer, a notable Belgian Cooperator and the statue of the Sacred Heart was given by a French lady.<sup>49</sup>

### **Some problems associated with rapid development**

With the completion of the Church and the setting up of the College in Surrey Lodge, the stage was set for these two sectors of the Mission to develop separately. Fr Macey remained parish priest in theory, but more and more, the work of the parish became the concern of one or two priests. Among the first was Fr William Kelly, parish priest from 1902 till 1919, who died in the terrible influenza epidemic at the end of the War. As time went on, the main focus of the Salesians interest became the College. Connections with the Mission were retained by individuals like Fr Rabbagliati who organised the Parish Choir, but since the numbers of boarders in the College began to grow and the number of Salesians involved correspondingly increased, the natural centre of the Community became Surrey Lodge. Even the traditional Salesian idea of an Oratory or Boys' Club attached to the church for the local youngsters never materialised. Don Rua's first letter to Fr McKiernan had recommended getting the youngsters together regularly, but this tended to remain a side-line.

I rejoice at your getting the young people together as you already do on Thursdays, add as much as you can to their numbers.<sup>50</sup>

This Thursday club soon seemed to have been taken over by the adults of the Mission, and finally became reduced to a few games after the Sunday Catechism classes run by the Parish Priest and the Sisters.

<sup>48</sup> *Bollettino Salesiano*, Novembre, 1893, Torino, 1893, p. 226-234.

<sup>49</sup> Batt. Chron.: Oct. 14th, 1893.

<sup>50</sup> SDB GB. Rua to McKiernan (26.3.1888): "Mi rallegro delle radunanze di giovani che già fate al Giovedì, aumentatene quanto potete il numero..."



### The position of the Coadjutor Brothers

Another problem that arose in England was that of the role of the coadjutor Brothers. Partly, at least, because of the English emphasis on priestly vocations and middle class education, the coadjutor Brothers, who in the Italian situation, saw themselves as professional tradesmen who trained craft apprentices, found themselves in England regarded merely as domestic servants. The rapid turnover among these confreres in the early years tends to confirm this analysis.

The first of these brothers was Sig. Rossaro who had come with Fr McKiernan in November 1887 as the cook. By April 9th, 1888, Fr Macey decided to send him to Lille because he had been gravely affected by homesickness and become useless in the house. He was replaced by Giovanni Avaro who within the month according to Don Bonavia was 'not happy unless he is named [for elsewhere]...' <sup>51</sup> He was sent back to Italy to continue his studies by Don Durando in October 1891. <sup>52</sup>

He was replaced by two more, Fortunato Festini and Sig. Rossignol who were sent away by Fr Macey in November 1894, because,

I see no hope of their improvement. Now we are in a terrible condition having no one in the house who can do the cooking. I will write this evening to Don Lazzero to ask him to find us a good cook. <sup>53</sup>

The brothers' side of the story is told most clearly by G.B. Aspesi in a letter he wrote to his Provincial in 1896:

First of all, I should say that I was sent here to London to be the cook; under Obedience, I was content, but I did not know what it meant to be a cook here.

Hardly had I arrived when immediately I had to wash dishes, clean the toilets, sweep the yards and peel the potatoes etc.

Since I didn't even know the language, I couldn't talk to anyone except the superiors. I have spent nine months really sick at heart, really fed up. Since then, I've found myself working in the kitchen against my will, because I really don't know the first thing about cooking... It seems to me that I am almost a prisoner and that this task is too much for me... I feel, always, like a machine, work, work, work... <sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> ASC 3557 E10 Bonavia to Barberis (2 Nov. 1888): "...compreso Avaro che non è contento se non lo nomino..."

<sup>52</sup> Batt. Chron.: Oct. 1891.

<sup>53</sup> ASC 3559 A3 Macey to Rua: "...perché vedevo che non c'era speranza di miglioramento. Ora siamo in una brutta condizione non avendo nessuno in casa che possa fare il cuoco. Scriverò al Signor Don Lazzero questa sera per pregarlo di trovarci qualche buon cuoco."

<sup>54</sup> ASC 3559 B6, B7, B8, B9, G.B. Aspesi to Don Lazzero (10.12.1896): "Prima di tutto

This picture of a lonely, overworked, undervalued brother treated like a domestic servant does very little credit to the Salesian tradition of professional lay religious such as Don Bosco envisaged.

In the following year Luigi Roncali wrote to Turin to complain that in London he was alone and had almost no carpentry work on which to exercise his craft. (All he ever ever got to do was work in the kitchen.)

My Fr Rector [Fr Macey] said to me that here, there will never be a workshop with different tradesmen, because the house here is a studentate.<sup>55</sup>

This preoccupation with training students for the priesthood and clerical positions had this unfortunate effect that the coadjutor Brothers felt there was little or no place for them among the Salesians in England. Fr Macey seems to have had a very clerical model of a religious order in mind, perhaps a result of his early days at Downside, or from the prevailing atmosphere in the English Catholic situation. He even tried to insist that the coadjutor brothers, who always wore lay-dress in Italy, should wear the cassock and collar in England and obtained permission for this from Don Rua. Fr Macey also introduced the custom, quite unknown among the Salesians elsewhere, but which prevailed in the ancient Religious Orders of adopting a special religious name. This practice was quite foreign to Don Bosco's conception of a Salesian as being, first of all, an ordinary good Christian, who lives among young people not cut off from them. In the School log-books of the Sacred Heart Elementary School, Aloysius Sutherland is noted as Brother James, and Walter Austen as Bro Bede.<sup>56</sup>

This 'clericalism' had several other effects. Firstly, it ensured the development of the Salesian College, Battersea, as a fee-paying secondary school, and this became the model of development for the whole province in the years that followed. Secondly, the boarding school model became so predominant among the English Salesians that any wider outreach to local youngsters through a Boy's Club, such as Charlotte Despard ran at Nine

gli dirò che quando mi anno mandato qui a Londra per fare il cuoco; per ubbedienza mi sono accontentato; ma non conosceva cosa significava fare il cuoco qui. Appena arrivato invece ho fatto subito il lava piatti, pulire i cessi, scopare i cortili, pelar patate ecc. ecc. Non sapendo anche la lingua, il non poter parlare con nessuno (salvo coi superiori) ho passato nove mesi proprio di mal'incuore [...] proprio brutti. Poi mi anno messo in cucina, ma contro la mia volontà perché io veramente di cucinare non me ne intendevo [...] e mi sembra che sono quasi un prigionero e che la carica è troppo grossa per me [...] si fa sempre come una macchina lavoro, lavoro, lavoro..."

<sup>55</sup> ASC 3559 B12 L. Roncali to Amatissimo Padre (19.1.1897): "Il mio Signor Direttore mi disse che qui non ci sarà mai un laboratorio con diversi operai perché qui è casa di studentato..."

<sup>56</sup> Trott St. Rc School Log Book Boys, Vol. I intro.

Elms, seemed to have been ruled out in favour of the rather limiting concentration on a boarding school or seminary.

The pattern of concentrating on colleges (ie. secondary boarding schools) had received the official backing of the General Chapter of 1886 which had approved and inserted in the rules the following warning against parishes which reinforced the position of the colleges:

Under ordinary circumstances, parishes are not to be accepted because (it was understood) they are incompatible with our activities.<sup>57</sup>

These colleges, which, in the liberal [anti-clerical] milieu of the day, were demanded by the Catholics in reaction to the firmly anti-clerical State schools, achieved an enormous popularity throughout Italy and in the rest of Europe, and indeed served as 'so many seedbeds from which to draw new recruits into the family of his (Don Bosco's) educators'.<sup>58</sup> Though they required a more systematic and less charismatic sort of leadership than the Oratory or youth club, they also, entailed all the risks that go with stabilization: e.g., stagnation, narrow confinement within the school precincts, a certain quiescence [conformism], and the extinction of the concern and drive for creativity.<sup>59</sup>

When all that is said, it has to be admitted that the first ten years of the Salesian work in England were spectacularly successful in attracting new members to the Society. The first English students, Ernest Blackborrow and Michael McCarthy, were ordained in 1896 and Aloysius Hawarden in the following year. Their ordinations did indeed mark a very real achievement for this tiny Salesian community working in a very deprived area.

<sup>57</sup> P. STELLA, *Don Bosco Life and Work*, New York, 1985, p. 128.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

**BECOMING A PROVINCE (1898-1908)**

We have to put our house on a sure footing for our Pious Society, for although we heartily wish the Bishop another 100 years of life, we also think our own Society will go on long after the is gone. (Don Rua)

The years from 1898 to 1908 witnessed the first real expansion of the work of the Salesians in England. Not only was it marked by the consolidation of the work at Battersea but also by the expansion of the work, both in parishes and orphanages in and around London and as far afield as Cape Town in South Africa. This second stage of growth took the Salesians in England from a position of being largely dependent for finance and training on the Mother House in Turin, to the status of a Province or *ispettoria* of the Society. While Don Rua was insistent that the provincial or *ispettore* was the direct, authoritative representative of the Rector Major, nonetheless he maintained a strictly unitary view of the Salesian Congregation.

During the Tenth General chapter in 1904, he explained, that according to Don Bosco the “inspectorates” were not like the provinces of other religious organisations, because the Salesian Congregation was meant to form one single family, not scattered fragments of a family. Fr Ceria says that Fr Rua feared that the Salesians might give way to the temptation to become provincialised.<sup>1</sup>

In fact the chief role of the Provincial was to provide for the training of students in the novitiate and during their studies, and to bring to a local level the unity and pastoral care the Rector Major sought to provide for the whole Society.

The personality who dominated the Salesian work in England for almost the whole of the first three decades was that of Charles Bernard Macey. His task was immense and complex. He had to face the problem of how to transplant the Salesian Spirit, Don Bosco’s way of working for the young, from its original Italian context to the conditions he found in London at the turn of the century. The problem continues of how to remain

<sup>1</sup> M. WIRTH, *Don Bosco and the Salesians*, New York, 1982, p. 237. See also E. CERIA, *Annali della Società Salesiana*, Torino, 1946, vol. III, p. 557.

true to the Founder's insight, yet not betray the cultural riches of one's own background.

From almost the beginning, Fr Macey had to fulfil this very delicate role practically single handed. After Fr McKiernan's death, none of his earliest collaborators were in any position to question his view of how to proceed, either because of his direct link with Don Bosco, however tenuous this actually was, or because they were Italians who didn't speak English very well.

From 1887 to 1902 the London house had come under the authority of Don Celestino Durando who was Provincial of the houses in Rome and abroad. It was only in 1902 that Don Rua appointed Fr Macey as Provincial of England and South Africa. Nonetheless, because of distance Fr Macey's influence was paramount.

### **Charles Bernard Macey**

Charles Bernard Macey was born at Culver St., Salisbury on December 28th, 1854, the son of John and Joan Mary. His father had been an ostler and yard-man at the Red Lion Hotel, but for most of Charles' boyhood was landlord of the Oddfellows Arms. At 16 years of age, Charles became a shop assistant in Larkow's, a gentlemens' outfitters, at 30/- a week. He was likewise a prominent member of the local dramatic society, an interest that he never lost.<sup>2</sup>

His love of colour and costume also found expression in his worship at St. Martin's High Anglican church in Salisbury, where his parents worshipped. It was not long before Charles was noticed praying at St. Osmund's Catholic Church and had attracted the attention of the newly arrived Sisters of Charity. They introduced him to Canon G. Cook who received him into the Church on the 27th February 1870. He made his first Holy Communion on the following Sunday and shortly afterwards he was confirmed by Bishop Clifford.

At St. Osmund's he also caught the eye of Lady Herbert of Lea, a prominent convert and widow, who lived on her estate nearby at Wilton. She had been received into the Church herself only five years before on January 5th 1865, and had become a prominent benefactor of Bishop (later Cardinal) Herbert Vaughan, the founder of the Mill Hill Missionaries.<sup>3</sup> She adopted Charles Macey's cause and sent him to Downside Abbey, where he seems to have stayed about six months.

<sup>2</sup> SDB, GB, J. NOONAN, *Don Bosco's England* (hereafter Noonan), p. 18ff. The details are claimed to come from Fr Macey's brother.

<sup>3</sup> A. McCORMACK MHM, *Cardinal Vaughan*, London, 1966, p. 91.

Lady Herbert had come to know about Don Bosco through some acquaintances. They had spoken enthusiastically of a visit they paid to Turin, at a meeting with Cardinal Manning [who was her confessor] at which she was present in 1878.<sup>4</sup> In 1884 she herself had written an article for the Jesuit Magazine *The Month*, in which she gave a detailed account of Don Bosco's life and work and also included a strange incident which happened to a relation of hers which must have come to her first hand. She then, went on, apparently, to make a direct reference to Charles Macey:

Don Bosco was anxious, not long ago, to get some English students. He asked us to send him any youths with vocations who had no means to pursue their studies in England. We did so and one youth who was sent, though an excellent fellow, yet had a thorough John Bull spirit of incredulity of anything new or out of the way. Yet he had not been there a year before he wrote to a good priest who had been his director saying, "You know how disinclined I was to believe in any of the strange things I was told when I first came here. But 'seeing is believing' and the extraordinary miracles worked by Don Bosco almost daily, are such that a man must be blind and a fool not to feel that he is in the presence of one who is, if not a saint, most singularly favoured by God. He obtains all he prays for, whether it be temporal means to carry on his great works, or the cure of physical and moral diseases."<sup>5</sup>

Accompanied by another companion, (perhaps the O'Connor mentioned in Donnellan's letters) he arrived in Turin in December 1880 where he was put in the care of Fr Philip Rinaldi. At the age of 26 he began to learn Latin. In the following year he entered the novitiate under Fr Giulio Barberis and made his perpetual vows on October 7th 1882. He spent some time working at Nice in Southern France. Charles Macey was ordained priest on June 5th, 1887 in Turin, returning to Nice from July to October of that year.<sup>6</sup>

He had encountered Donnellan at San Benigno Canavese and after Ordination, set off with Edward McKiernan and the coadjutor Brother Rossaro for Battersea. They would seem to have left Turin on the 14th of November and spent the night of the 15th at Paris arriving at Victoria Station to be met by Fr. Francis Bourne on the evening of the 16th 'in a fog thick enough to cut', as the *Chronicle* described it.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> MB. 18: 447-448, records the visit of Walter Hussey Walsh, secretary of the Grand Council of the Society of St Vincent de Paul to Don Bosco which was spoken about at Cardinal Manning's house.

<sup>5</sup> *The Month*, London, 1884, Jan. 1884, p. 62.

<sup>6</sup> Noonan, p. 18ff, gives Dec. 2nd, 1880 while *The Profession Books*, SDB, GB gives 12.2.1880, which seems more likely to be reliable.

<sup>7</sup> *Cronaca della Casa del Sacro Cuore di Gesù a Londra*, Battersea House Archives, (hereafter Batt. Chron.) November 1887.



Although Fr Macey had spent seven years abroad in Salesian Houses, much of that time was spent either at San Benigno, with the regime peculiar to a house of studies and Novitiate, or in the Orphanage at Nice. In other words, nearly all his training was spent at some distance from the Oratory in Turin which was the Mother House of the congregation, hallowed by the presence of Don Bosco himself. Part of the devotion which Fr Macey inspired in very many of his students and confrères, came from his claim to be a direct link with the founder, yet he would appear only to have spent one year 1880-1881 actually in residence at Valdocco. On the other hand, Fr McKiernan had lived at the Oratory almost constantly from 1876. His tragic death left the passing on of the tradition of Don Bosco to Fr Macey, whose links with it were much less secure. This would help to explain some of the rather strange features which Fr Macey introduced or allowed to develop among the Salesians in England.

### **Financial problems**

Amongst the most serious obstacles to the development of the work in England during the first 30 years, which is often reflected in Don Rua's correspondence with Fr Macey, was the serious shortage of funds. From Fr McKiernan's first letter to the Countess describing their desperate financial plight and the Chronicler's description of their early accommodation, "the little house in Trott St, tiny, poor and almost completely bare",<sup>8</sup> it is clear that the methods of fund raising which had worked elsewhere, either because of Don Bosco's extraordinary presence and prestige or because of the evident merit of the work being done, were unlikely to work in England.

Several critical moments have already been noted during those early years. On the death of Fr McKiernan in December 1888, Fr Connolly, a neighbouring Parish Priest, saw to all the funeral arrangements, saving the Salesians from considerable embarrassment. When the first community finally managed to buy the lease of the properties at 62-64 Orbel St. and later at 58-60 with the blacksmith's shop, they had to rely on financial help from Turin.

We are rather worried. To date we have not heard whether the money we sent you for the famous contract has reached you, nor do we know whether the contract has been entered into or not. On receipt of money,

<sup>8</sup> Batt. Chron.: Nov. 1887: "I suddetti arrivano a Londra circa le 6 pomeridiane — Nebbia fittissima — Sono incontrati alla stazione Victoria da D. Bourne ed in sua compagnia vengono alla casetta di Trott street, piccola, povera e pressochè sfornita di tutto... S'accomodano alla meglio."



especially a notable sum, it is customary to make a quick acknowledgement of the same.<sup>9</sup>

Fr Rua's letter would suggest that Fr Macey was somewhat slack in replying to letters even those that included money.

One of the main sources of financial help for the Salesians in France was the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, and in 1892 Don Rua seems to have encouraged to President of the Nice Conference, a lawyer called M. Michel, to write to the London Conference to encourage them to help the fledgling community, but with relatively little success.<sup>10</sup> What became obvious was that though England was rich, Catholic England was poor, and every poor parish and institution was calling out to the same few wealthy Catholics for help and support.

The two most important transactions of this early period were the building of the Sacred Heart Church, consecrated in 1893 and the purchase of Surrey Lodge in 1895. In 1892 Don Rua was already working hard trying to raise money for the Battersea Church:

I am here in Rome doing what I can for the Church in London, I spoke to Mgr. Stonor this morning and recommended the holy enterprise to him. He said he would be very glad to do what he can.<sup>11</sup>

Don Rua was always anxious to think of economy and in the same letter he remarked:

<sup>9</sup> SDB. GB, Macey Letters (hereafter ML), Rua - Macey 22.12.1889.

These letters mostly from Don Rua to Fr Macey cover a period from Jan 1889 till the year before Don Rua's death in 1910. They are most frequent during the years after 1902 when Fr Macey became Provincial or *ispettore* of the house in England and Cape Town. For the first 11 years they averaged two a year but between 1902 and 1909 there are 84 letters almost one a month, with 21 in 1904, being the high point of the correspondence. The change would be accounted for by the fact that as Provincial Fr Macey became directly responsible to the Rector Major, Don Rua, until then, he had been responsible to Don Durando, who was for the most of the earlier period Provincial of the *Romana ed Esteri*. The translation used is that of Rev. Fr Martin McPake SDB (unpublished): "Ci troviamo alquanto inquieti perché non abbiamo ancora ricevuto alcun cenno che vi sia pervenuta la somma che vi abbiamo spedita pel noto contratto, né se il medesimo abbia avuto luogo. Quando si riceve danaro, e tanto più se una somma considerevole, si usa tosto darne cenno di ricevuta."

<sup>10</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 23.3.1892. E. Michel to Mr. Costelloe.

<sup>11</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 25.1.1892. Rua - Macey: "Sono a Roma e mi interesso della Chiesa di Londra. Stamattina ho parlato con Mons. Stonor e gli ho raccomandato la nostra santa impresa ed egli mi promise di farlo ben volentieri [...] Non comprendo poi come non si possa fare secondo che te ne scrissi, cioè, innalzando le due mura laterali del nuovo edificio in modo da comprendere la Chiesuola attuale, demolendo la quale, a suo tempo, la nuova servirebbe ad un gran numero di fedeli [...] Stasera vado a parlare colla Contessa *Stappale*, e vorrei dirti di pregare se avessi tempo da farlo. Prega però e fa pregare perché il Signore ci mandi qualche buona mano che l'abbia piena di sterline da dare per Lui, altrimenti è la volta che faremo bancarotta."

I don't see why they can't do as I suggested in my letter to you, I mean putting up the two side walls in such a way as to enclose the little church that is already there, leaving its demolition till the appropriate moment, when the larger building would be ready to take a larger number of faithful.

However, Don Rua could also see the funny side of his efforts to raise funds:

This evening I shall be going to speak to the Countess de Stacpoole, and if time allowed, I would like to get you to pray. Pray anyway and get others to pray that the Lord may send us helping hands, full of pounds sterling for him, otherwise we are sure to go bankrupt.

Faced with the enormous burdens of building costs, he looked to any expedient to reduce them, bank loans, mortgaging the property and even using Italian workers,

which would give them work and wages and it might be an economy for us, as they might be disposed to work for less. Again we shall have to look to God.

In 1895, Don Rua was trying to raise money from Benefactors in France for the purchase of Surrey Lodge:

Ever since my arrival in France, I have taken up the cause of the purchase of the property, on which we have set our hearts. I spoke among others to Canon Cauvin, who made some difficulties, at first. However, on the Feast of St Francis of Sales, I saw M. Haumer, who is well known to you and is a great friend of the Congregation, so I asked him to take up your cause. The move was successful, I am now sending you a copy of the letter which I received from the Canon. As you see, the money is now there for the price you indicated in your last letter. It is up to you to push it through. I saw Fr Bourne at Cannes, last week, as he was accompanying your Bishop to Rome. He received a considerable loan from some bank for his seminary building and he told me that if needs be, a loan could be had from the same bank on favourable conditions.<sup>12</sup>

Surrey Lodge was duly bought, though Fr Macey's plans for extensions to the accommodation and classrooms involved a further appeal

<sup>12</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 4.2.1895. Rua - Macey: "Dachè entrai in Francia non cessai d'occuparmi dell'acquisto del campo che ci sta tanto a cuore. Fra gli altri ne parlai al Canco. Cauvin di Nizza, che da principio fece qualche difficoltà; ma poi avendo il giorno di S. Francesco veduto il caro Sigr. Haumer da voi ben conosciuto, raccomandai a lui di patrocinare la vostra causa presso il Canonico con cui è buon amico. La cosa riuscì bene e qui ti unisco copia della lettera ricevuta stamane dal sullodato Canonico."

to Don Rua's charity, one felt that he was unable to answer completely. In the same letter he wrote:

About the Abbé Cauvin I don't think he exacted any interest on the loan. He was happy enough with the promise to repay him in instalments of L.500. This is for your information. If the loan you need for your building in London is 4,500 Italian Lire, we could find that easily enough but if you are talking about the same sum in sterling then I can't see where such a sum could be had.

The international obligations Don Rua had assumed and the other calls on his charity, meant he could not accede to all Fr Macey's requests.

I shall get you monetary help, as soon as possible, for payment of the lawyer's fees and also to help you pay for the wall and for repairs. The departure of the missionaries has drained our resources, but I hope we shall be able to send you help by next week. You do your part, go round looking for help, we cannot shoulder everything. We can do no more than share out what Providence sends us among the works in need, but we cannot assume responsibility for any specific undertakings.<sup>13</sup>

Two years later, Don Rua was still trying to persuade Fr Macey to assume part of the financial burden himself, for the work in London:

You ask, whether I am prepared to undertake the payment of 4% interest, if you are able to raise a further loan with mortgage. Would I were in a position to do so; but since I still have to pay the interest on our earlier loan, I am on the rocks. I am confident, however, you will manage to cope yourself.<sup>14</sup>

A little later that year, Don Rua seemed to lose patience with Fr Macey's lack of self reliance:

As for a loan, I'm afraid we really cannot agree to the loan you desire. We are burdened with debt and it would be tempting Providence to agree to your proposal. You will have to be patient and limit your field of action, unless the Lord sends you some extraordinary mark of his

<sup>13</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 15.11.1895. Rua - Macey: "Quanto alla spesa necessaria per pagare l'avvocato ed unitamente soccorrervi per pagare il muro e riparazioni procurerò di spedirti qualche cosa appena ci sia possibile. Ora per partenza dei Missionari ci troviamo veramente spaesati. Spero per la prossima settimana potremo mandarvi qualche aiuto. Procurate anche voi di raggararvi e cercar soccorsi, giacchè noi non possiamo far fronte a tutto: bisogna che ci limitiamo a ripartire quello che la Provvidenza ci manda, tra le varie cose bisognose senza poterci incaricare di nessuno in particolare."

<sup>14</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 9.4.1897: "4. Riguardo alla questione che mi fai se io mi incaricherei di pagar l'interesse del 4% nel caso d'imprestito novello con ipoteca, ti dirò che vorrei trovarmi in grado di farlo, ma avendo già da pagare l'interesse dell'altro imprestito, mi trovo veramente incagliato. Ho però buona fiducia che voi medesimi troverete modo di farvi fronte."

providence. It took Don Bosco 16 years to have a house like yours and 27 before he had a church like yours. We must not be rash in our undertakings. We must pray and be patient.<sup>15</sup>

In the following two years, Fr Macey started receiving stiff letters from the Oratory, asking him to repay the £.4000 he owed. This pressure would seem to have been applied because of the financial position of the Oratory itself.

Due to the repeated insistence of our creditors at the Oratory, who are demanding urgent repayment and are threatening to have nothing more to do with us, unless we settle our accounts, I decided to examine our debts and credits and discovered in the process that at the end of last September your house still owed the Oratory L.4152 pounds.<sup>16</sup>

The debt, it would appear, was never actually paid. In 1901, Don Rua explained:

You must have noticed from the latest invoices from the Oratory, that because of your financial difficulties, the Superior Chapter paid off your outstanding debt at the Oratory amounting to L.4552 pounds at the end of September 1899. Always keep a check on the administration of your house and help the prefect to maintain a wise economy, which is one of the principle resources of any family.<sup>17</sup>

In the years that followed down to 1909, different houses in the Province occasionally got into more or less serious financial difficulty [e.g. the house at Cape Town was declared bankrupt, though finally, Bishop Leonard came to some agreement with the creditors to let the Salesians be discharged.] In general the financial situation of the Province seemed to

<sup>15</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 21.11.1897. Rua - Macey: "Riguardo all'imprestito mi rincresce molto ma non possiam proprio acconsentire all'imprestito da te vagheggiato. Siamo tanto sovracarichi di debiti che sarebbe tentare il Signor permettere quello che tu proponi. Bisognerà aver pazienza e limitare la vostra sfera d'azione finchè il Signor non vi mandi qualche straordinaria provvidenza. D. Bosco prima d'arrivare ad una casa come la tua, ne impiegò 16 anni e prima di aver una chiesa come la tua ne impiegò 27. Non vogliamo precipitare le cose. Preghiamo e pazientiamo."

<sup>16</sup> ML. SDB. GB. December 1899. Rua - Carissimo Direttore della casa di Londra: "Dietro le reiterate insistenze dei creditori dell'Oratorio che esigono di essere pagati quanto prima e minacciano di non più servirlo, se non regola con loro i suoi conti, ho voluto esaminare i debiti ed i crediti e fra le altre cose ho trovato che codesta casa a tutto settembre u.s. gli deve la somma di lire 4952,00..."

<sup>17</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 15.5.1901. Rua - Caro Direttore, Londra: "Avrai rilevato dalle ultime fatture dell'Oratorio, che il Capitolo Superiore viste le strettezze di codesta casa ne pagò i debiti che avevate coll'Oratorio stesso facendo il Saldo fino a tutto settembre 1899 in L.4552 [...] Tienti sempre al corrente dell'amministrazione della tua casa, ed aiuta il Prefetto a mantenervi quella saggia economia che è una delle principali risorse di ogni famiglia."

stabilise itself somewhat, probably because the school at Battersea had gradually expanded its numbers and its financial viability. However, at a more general level, Don Rua could still write in 1907:

May St. Joseph help us to cope with the enormous expenses involved whether to maintain your Province or for so many other reasons.<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps one of the most significant developments in the financial organisation of the Salesians world-wide was the adoption from British commercial practice of the idea of setting up of a Charitable Trust, or Limited company, to act as the owners of the various properties of the Society:

A good lawyer friend of ours had the idea of setting up a Limited Company in London, in keeping with the laws of England, entitled to purchase property abroad as a way of avoiding all the problems of inheritance following the death of the legal owners.<sup>19</sup>

In the following year Don Rua submitted a document for an English lawyer to examine, he was encouraging Fr Macey to follow suit.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps it was partly with his own death in mind, that Don Rua in 1909 decided to make London the centre of the whole Society's financial base. In that year the Trustees of the Society raised an enormous loan of £.50,000 on the security of main properties in Italy, namely, the Oratory in Valdocco, Valsalice, the property at San Giovanni Evangelista, and the property in Milan, on which they paid 2% interest. The loan was raised from Messers Gibson, Usher and Co., Portugal St., Lincoln Inn, London WC. The agreement lasted till at least 1912. It may well have been negotiated as extra cover in case a financial crisis should blow up on the death of Don Rua.<sup>21</sup>

Overall, we can trace during these years a process of gradual change from total financial dependence of the Province on Turin, to a more stable situation where there were very few demands for funds from Turin.

<sup>18</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 18.3.1907: Rua - Macey: "S. Giuseppe ci aiuti a far fronte alle enormi spese che occorrono sia per cotesta ispettoria sia per tante altre ragioni."

<sup>19</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 27.4.1894. Rua - Macey: "Venne in mente di qualche bravo avvocato, nostro buon amico di costituire costi in Londra una società anonima, secondo le leggi inglesi con facoltà di comprare stabili anche all'estero e così poter evitare i tanti diritti di successione alla morte dei proprietari."

<sup>20</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 15.11.1895. Rua - Macey: "Non pensavo che potesse costar tanto lo schema di società preparato dal vostro avvocato. Il nostro, in vista delle opere di beneficenza a cui è destinato il suo, ce lo fece gratuitamente [...] Spero che anche voi potrete almeno ottenere una riduzione e che quando si tratti di fabbricare o fare acquisti potrete già avere costituita la vostra società; giacchè penso che sarà necessario costituirne parecchie."

<sup>21</sup> SDB. GB.: "Istrumento di Garanzia per garantire 50,000 lire sterline... Gibson Usher and Co., Portugal St. Lincolns Inn. W.C."

### Trusting the local Superior

Perhaps one of the most significant features which is manifest in the Rua-Macey correspondence is the degree of trust and confidence which Don Rua was prepared to place in the local Superior. Here, we see a most surprising style of authority exercised by the Rector Major, Don Rua, which was almost 'non-directive' in its approach, insisting again and again on the need for the local Superior to discern what God might be asking in the local situation. He encouraged, counselled and gave advice, but wanted the local Superior to take the responsibility himself for the decisions which were to be made. We can trace this back to the very beginning. On the subject of Fr Macey's appointment as Superior, Don Rua wrote to him:

Do me the kindness of thinking things over at the feet of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, then, write to me letting me know your opinion, before, I send off my letter to the Bishop.<sup>22</sup>

In an age when Papal infallibility had been defined as a dogma, and creeping infallibility had affected ecclesiastical authority on almost every rung of the ladder: from the Curial offices, through local Parish priests, to the sisters who taught in the parish school, one would have expected to find that an unquestioning authoritarianism had become almost the 'hallmark' of Roman Catholicism everywhere. Therefore, it is all the more remarkable to find a Superior General who expected and encouraged his local Superiors to have minds of their own and to grow in independence.

When a problem occurred Don Rua seems to have expected that a genuine discussion would probably help solve the problem. In 1902 he wrote:

So far, in spite of our most diligent inquiries we have been unable to find you a Master of Novices. In this situation, I wonder if it would be of any help if you came out to talk to us, I leave this to you to decide, and I don't want to put pressure on you one way or the other.<sup>23</sup>

This belief that a genuine exchange of views might be part of the process of discerning God's will, was deeply rooted in Don Bosco's own practice and tradition. The *rendiconto* or personal stocktaking took the form of a friendly 'chat' with the Superior, in which the Salesian was

<sup>22</sup> ML. SDB. GB. Rua - Macey 22.1.89: "Favorisci considerare la cosa ai piedi di Gesù sacramentato e poi scrivermi il tuo parere prima che si spedisca la lettera al Vescovo."

<sup>23</sup> ML. SDB. GB. Rua - Macey 27.10.1902: "Finora malgrado le più diligenti ricerche non abbiám potuto trovare il maestro de' vostri novizi... In tal condizione di cose non so se possa giovar a qualche cosa il tuo disturbo per venire quà: lascio a te il decidere, non animandoti e neppur dissuadentoti."



encourage to open his heart to him, in the manner in which Don Bosco himself had opened his own heart to his first priest friend and director, Don Calosso. Don Bosco firmly believed that this practice was an excellent foundation for the development of a genuine trust and confidence between the Superior and the Salesian, upon which a really creative obedience could be based. Don Bosco wrote,

It is necessary for the good of our Congregation: specifically for us who have little contemplative life and who have to instruct, preach, catechise, look after and teach in prisons, in hospitals, and in educational institutions.<sup>24</sup>

The very spread and variety of the work of the Salesians meant that there had to be a trust and confidence in one another, which could allow and encourage a flexible, creative approach to the needs of young people, not hampered by a wooden and authoritarian style of obedience.

Don Rua, further, encouraged the same process of consultation to go on between the local Superior and the community. He advised Fr Macey in 1889:

If there are three of you, there are many matters on which you could advise one another.<sup>25</sup>

And twelve months later he again encouraged Fr Macey to confide in his two companions:

I had a letter from Fr Bonavia from which I gather that he doesn't know anything about the circular. It would be wise to let both himself and Fr Rabagliati look at it then perhaps the three of you could agree on how to appeal for help for your house.<sup>26</sup>

Even in questions of discipline, Don Rua was anxious that the persons involved should be persuaded to take the necessary step themselves:

It would be better to get O'Connor to lay the clerical habit aside, with all the weaknesses that cling to him already, we now have that of

<sup>24</sup> P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella Storia della Religiosità Cattolica*, Roma, 1981, Vol. 2, p. 416: "...per il bene della Congregazione nostra. Specialmente noi che abbiamo poca vita contemplativa e che abbiamo da insegnare, predicare, catechizzare, assistere, fare scuola, nelle carceri, negli ospedali, nelle case di educazione. (Quoted by Don Bosco from Rodriguez: *Esercizio di Perfezione*, p. 446)."

<sup>25</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 22.1.1889. Rua - Macey: "...tra tutti e tre potrete consigliarvi in molte cose."

<sup>26</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 22.12.1889. Rua - Macey: "Don Bonavia mi scrive una lettera, da cui sembra non essere ancora informato di questa circolare. Converrà che tu la faccia vedere a lui e a D. Rabagliati e che vi mettiate tutti d'accordo per parlare e cercare ajuto per codesta casa."



disobedience. He could never be admitted to Holy Orders. Make it your concern to persuade him to take this step.<sup>27</sup>

Again in another case, Don Rua recommended gentle persuasion:

It would be fine if you could gently persuade your Rector to stay at his post for another year.<sup>28</sup>

Though there was a gentleness about Don Rua's approach this did not mean that he was weak. In 1904 he wrote to Fr Macey asking him to send in his annual reports.

As I looked through the annual reports from the Provincials to the Rector Major, I did not notice yours from last year. Try to push yourself a little, and let me have it, for I am anxious to have detailed knowledge of all your houses.<sup>29</sup>

When in 1906, Fr Macey asked to be relieved of his office of Provincial, Don Rua replied firmly and yet reasonably:

You ask to be relieved of your present office. You have my sympathies and I am anxious to relieve you as much as I can, but it would be very awkward to think of changing at this stage, especially as you yourself acknowledge, that there is no one to take over from you. The person whose name you suggest is too timid, in my opinion, and would never do.<sup>30</sup>

While he could be firm in refusal where he thought it be necessary, in the same letter he showed himself unwilling to press Fr Macey to make any great sacrifice against his will:

If you really cannot let Fr Marsh go, very well. Since you have already appointed someone else to take over his job, it does look however, as if

<sup>27</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 4.3.1903. Rua - Macey: "Quanto ad O'Connor converrà fargli smettere l'abito da chierico. Colle mancanze che gravitano sopra di lui, a cui si aggiunge ora la sua disobbedienza, giammai potrà essere ammesso agli ordini sacri. Vedi persuaderlo a tal passo."

<sup>28</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 11.4.1904. Rua - Macey: "...bisognerà incoraggiarlo colle tue buone maniere ed anche avviarlo a far le parti di Direttore, come un maestro avvia il discepolo."

<sup>29</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 4.12.1904. Rua - Macey: "Ripassando i rendiconti annuali degli Ispettori al Rettor Maggiore non ho trovato i tuoi dello scorso anno. Vedi un po di darti premura per farmeli avere, che mi sta molto cuore di aver notizie particolareggiate di tutte le tue case..."

<sup>30</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 27.10.1906. Rua - Macey: "Quanto alla dimanda che fai di essere esonerato del tuo ufficio, io prendo parte alle tue pene e desidero diminuire i tuoi fastidi quanto mi è possibile, ma pel momento non è conveniente pensare ad un cambio, tanto più che tu stesso riconosci che non avesti alcun che possa sostituirti, colui che proponi mi par molto timido e però non adatto."

he could be released more easily, nevertheless if this presents you with a problem, I have no intention of asking a big sacrifice from you.<sup>31</sup>

In cases, where there was a real difference of opinion, Don Rua firmly believed that friendly discussions could clear up a lot of difficulties:

When Fr Tozzi is visiting England, I hope I will not forget to come and see us. I should be very happy if I were able to satisfy his desire, his need to build! Who knows if we were able to talk things over together, we might be able to work out something.<sup>32</sup>

These letters give eloquent testimony to Don Rua's style of authority. Don Rua exercised authority with great patience and reasonableness and an extraordinary level of trust in the local Superior. Perhaps the clearest example of this was the wholly exceptional permission which Don Rua gave Fr Macey, allowing him to give the coadjutor brothers the clerical habit or cassock.<sup>33</sup> Though this permission ran completely against the Salesian tradition, it was a mark of how far he was prepared to trust the local Superior to judge local circumstances.

### **The schools at Battersea**

Battersea continued to dominate the Salesian scene during the period down to 1908, consolidating its role both as the most developed secondary school and as a centre for training students for the priesthood. The Parish Elementary Schools played a significant part in this situation, providing not only for the education of the children of the Mission, but also through the pupil-teacher system, for the professional training of the Salesian students for the priesthood, as Certificated Teachers. Having successfully completed two years as pupil-teachers in the Elementary school, they could proceed on a Queen's Scholarship to the Catholic Training College at Hammersmith. After two years training they received their certificates.<sup>34</sup> However, since there was an effective ban on ordained clergyman teaching in elementary schools, as soon as the students went on to receive major orders, they had to give up teaching in the Elementary school. After the departure of the

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.: "Quanto a D. Marsh se veramente non puoi lasciarlo partire, pazienza. Ora che hai già stabilito un altro al suo posto pare che più facilmente potrebbe staccarsi, tuttavia se hai tanta difficoltà, non intendo importi un sacrificio troppo grave."

<sup>32</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 18.4.1909. Rua - Macey: "Spero che D. Tozzi venendo costà non mancherà di fare pure una visita a noi: quanto sarei contento se potessimo soddisfare il suo desiderio e bisogno di fabbricare! Chi sa se parlandoci non si possa combinare qualche cosa?"

<sup>33</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 2.9.1902. Macey - Rua.

<sup>34</sup> Batt. Chron.: Feb. 1894.

first Headmaster of the Boys' School, Mr. John Barry,<sup>35</sup> for promotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, East Battersea, a whole series of Salesians followed, among them Bernard Hopper, John McCourt, and Walter Austin. On the ordination of Fr Austin, there was no Salesian with the appropriate qualification, so the Headship was handed over to a layman in 1907:

The reason for this step was the resignation of Bro Bede (Walter Austin) SC, the Headmaster, who owing to his reception of Holy Orders was precluded by law from teaching in an elementary school. Not having a cleric of similar educational attainment, this step was imperative.<sup>36</sup>

The pupil-teacher system had been introduced in the autumn of 1846, by a series of Privy Council Minutes, under the guidance of Kay-Shuttleworth. It provided a way of improving the training of elementary school teachers and at the same time the possibility of limited social mobility to working class children.

At the College, Fr Bonavia was in overall charge of the studies. During his period of office the curriculum was strongly biased towards preparing for ecclesiastical studies. The main subjects taught were Latin, Greek, English and French, with some Mathematics, History and Geography, Fr Noonan remarked:

Up till 1898, the pupils were on the whole all preparing for the priesthood and therefore, one would expect a bias towards a severely classical education.

From 1896 to about 1900, the pupils who were beginning arts and crafts, generally attended the Elementary Day School, close at hand, and spent their evenings in the workshops where they began elementary lessons in tailoring, shoemaking or carpentry.<sup>37</sup>

This development of the Technical side of the College was partly in response to the demands of the new work in South Africa for qualified Trades teachers, the traditional role of the Salesian coadjutor brothers.

According to Fr Noonan, Fr Bonavia exerted discipline in the college by his calm manner and his constant presence, even studying alongside the students in evening study himself, and encouraging the other priests to do likewise. He was assisted by Fr Ernest Marsh and Fr Hawarden.

In May 1904, the elementary schools came under the control of the London County Council,

<sup>35</sup> J. Barry appointed Master at Boys' School, 2 Sept. 1890. Batt. Chron.: 1890. Brothers withdrawn, see Batt. Chron.: Sept. 1907.

<sup>36</sup> Batt. Chron.: Sept. 1907.

<sup>37</sup> Noonan, p. 228.

...as a Local Education Authority, in accordance with the provisions of the Balfour Act of 1902-3, Frs Kelly and McCourt S.C. represent the Congregation on the Board of Managers.<sup>38</sup>

This Act represented the Conservative government's acceptance and support for the 'Dual-System' of Church Schools as well as Board Schools being supported on the rates. Both Anglican and Catholic Schools

had their current expenses paid from the rates, the managers providing the buildings and appointed teachers.<sup>39</sup>

With the return of the Liberals to power in 1906, the Non-Conformists were determined to reverse the previous government's policy of support for denominational schools. The chronicler recorded:

April 1906: This month marked by adverse legislation by H.M. government against Catholic Schools.

May: The government's education policy called forth the hostility of the Catholic body. Demonstrations of protest held locally in the school room, in Battersea Park, in Clapham Common and the Albert Hall.<sup>40</sup>

In fact, the Liberal Government's legislation, which would have forbidden any denominational teaching in schools receiving government subsidy, was lost when the Lords challenged it by a series of cleverly worded amendments, and also through the fear of the break up of the alliance with the predominantly Catholic, Irish Parliamentary Party.

But with this danger past another more immediate problem had to be faced:

1906, Dec. 13th: Owing to a defect in the construction of a flue, the Infants and Girls departments of the elementary Schools were completely gutted. The fire broke out at 3,00am and the building burned for more than three hours. The repair of the damage caused will probably amount to £.3000 of which only £.828 may be secured from the insurance.

This disaster meant that the children had to be housed in temporary accommodation, while awaiting the rebuilding of the school.

The Boys in the new classrooms at Surrey House, the girls in the Boys' School and the Infants in the church. Splendid response to the appeal, from the Duke of Norfolk, the Marquis of Ripon, Viscount Landaff and many others.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Batt. Chron.: May 17, 1904.

<sup>39</sup> J.R. EDWARDS, *British History 1815-1939*, London, 1973, p. 356.

<sup>40</sup> Batt. Chron.: April, May 1906.

<sup>41</sup> Batt. Chron.: Dec. 13, 1906.

At the College during this period there was a notable growth in numbers, due to the extensions which were added in 1897 and 1900 respectively. By 1902, Fr Noonan estimated there were about 200 boys boarding.

In that year Fr Macey appointed Fr John F. McCourt as Prefect of Studies or Headmaster of the College. He was to be in charge till 1919. Under his leadership the whole idea of public examinations gradually began to dominate the curriculum. He adopted the Oxford University Local Examination for Forms Three, Four and Six [Preliminary, Junior and Senior], the College of Preceptors exams being taken in the second and Fifth Forms.<sup>42</sup>

This concentration on public examinations in nearly all the classes in the school was accompanied by a tighter disciplinary system. To this end, Fr McCourt introduced a system of pupils report cards or 'telegrams' on which were recorded misdemeanours and also a competitive system of class marks. This competitive system was further developed in the upper years where two 'streams' were introduced. These changes were introduced to correspond to the growth of numbers and the more demanding requirements of parents. More significantly they show the influential model of Grammar School education which could be seen at work all round them. Fr McCourt himself was trained as a teacher on a Queen's Scholarship in the English system and, no doubt, had absorbed much of what he saw in the system.

It was during the period of Fr McCourt's headship that corporal punishment would appear to have been first introduced to the College. Certainly by 1915 corporal punishment was commonplace though in the years between 1905 and 1910 it does not seem to have been at all common.<sup>43</sup>

This represented a significant departure from a venerable Salesian tradition which was enshrined in the *Regulations of the Oratory. (1877)* They distinguished the underlying spirit of the Institute as:

A Spirit of Charity and sacrifice, of fatherliness and brotherliness, in other words a family spirit.

Don Bosco, contrary to prevailing practice, had abolished any detailed surveillance of who went to confession and communion:

We do not order anyone to celebrate the sacraments. Everybody is free to go out of love, but need never go out of fear. He urged his assistants to treat the boys politely, and never to hit anyone even for serious offences; they should not even raise their voices or use harsh words.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Noonan, pp. 231-233.

<sup>43</sup> Testimonies of Mr Francis Kane (b. 1885 boarder, Chertsey 1904, Battersea 1905-1910) and Mr Valentine Brown (Battersea 1915-1919) Interviews SDB. GB.

<sup>44</sup> M. WIRTH, *Don Bosco and the Salesians*, New York, 1983, p. 142.

The changes which Fr McCourt brought in at Battersea were to set the pattern for the other schools, which the Salesians gradually began. The need to adapt to an English system of education seems to have involved a genuine departure from part of the original Salesian tradition.

### **The initial expansion: Burwash**

The initial expansion of the Salesian work in England was due in no small measure to the elevation of Fr Francis Bourne to the episcopate. He was consecrated as Coadjutor to Bishop Butt on May 1st 1896 and succeeded to the see of Southwark on Butt's resignation on April 9th 1897.<sup>45</sup> He had been a frequent visitor at Battersea after he returned to the diocese in 1887 and remained a close friend and Co-operator of the Salesians all his life. In 1893, he gave the afternoon conference to the Salesian Co-operators from all over Europe who gathered to celebrate the opening of the Sacred Heart Church. On the 22nd of October 1893, Don Rua paid a visit to the new seminary at Womersley at his invitation.<sup>46</sup> When he became Coadjutor and later as Bishop he frequently came for the Feast of St. Francis of Sales and that of the Sacred Heart in June.

It is not all that surprising, therefore, that he should waste little time in trying to get the Salesians another house in the diocese, to use as a Novitiate.

Through the influence and advice of Mgr. Bourne, the Holy See was approached with a view to obtaining its sanction for our taking over the church and house at Burwash, Sussex. This was subsequently obtained and it was decided to open this house as soon as possible.<sup>47</sup>

The Salesians assumed control on March 1st 1897, just before the formal succession of Bishop Bourne to Southwark on April 9th. Fr Michael McCarthy, only ordained the year before, was appointed as the first Superior of the second Salesian house in England.

Don Rua wrote to Fr Macey on this occasion with some sound advice on the property at Burwash which was not, in the event, heeded:

We were pleased to have the photograph of the new church entrusted to us at Burwash. You suggest putting up a small dormitory, a refectory and schools — I fully approve of your idea not to leave a priest alone there, but to place him in conditions where his work would be in keeping with our mission, namely to young people. The only snag about putting

<sup>45</sup> *Catholic Directory, 1900*, London, 1900, p. 273.

<sup>46</sup> *Batt. Chron.*: Oct. 1893.

<sup>47</sup> *Batt. Chron.*: Jan. 1897.



up buildings there is that they would be on land that is not ours, it would be wise to take prudent legal precautions.<sup>48</sup>

Don Rua was perceptive enough to see two significant problems about this foundation which had been accepted very quickly. First of all, that in this rural area there were likely to be very few young Catholics who would normally be the focus of the Salesian mission. Secondly that building without the security of owning the land was a very bad investment. Fr Macey evidently relied upon the presence of Bishop Bourne to iron out any difficulties, and on this point Don Rua had some sage advice.

If Bishop Bourne were to live for ever and were he to remain our Bishop, there would be no reason to fear, as I am sure you will agree, but he is liable to be moved. In no time, he will have to move on to enjoy the reward of his many good works. We have to put our house on a sure footing for our Pious Society, for although we heartily wish the bishop another 100 years of life, we also think that our own Society will go on long after he is gone. We could of course, eventually buy a plot of land near to the present one and build a new house. However, it is never wise to build on land that is not ours.<sup>49</sup>

This advice was not followed and this caused difficulties when the house came to be sold in the 1970's.

Though Fr Michael McCarthy was appointed as the first Superior at Burwash, he did not remain there long. The chronicler noted in May 1897:

It was deemed advisable and necessary to remove Don McCarthy from Burwash. He accordingly was recalled to Battersea and Don Verwarde was appointed instead.<sup>50</sup>

Quite what went wrong remains something of a mystery, what seems certain is that Fr McCarthy found it very difficult to settle down anywhere. In August the chronicler noted:

Since his removal from Burwash a variety of circumstances had rendered this step advisable and necessary.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 27.3.1897. Rua - Macey: "Abbiamo ricevuto con piacere la fotografia della nuova chiesa affidata alle nostre cure a Burwash. Il tuo desiderio sarebbe di fabbricare un piccolo dormitorio, refettorio e scuola. Approvo pienamente la tua idea di non lasciare colà un prete solo, ma che convenga metterlo in condizione di avere occupazione in conformità della nostra missione, cioè intorno alla gioventù. La sola difficoltà che noi abbiamo si è che fabbricando colà, noi fabbrichiamo in terreno altrui."

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.: "...se Mons. Bourne visse sempre, e fosse sempre nostro Vescovo nulla vi sarebbe a temere; ma siccome egli può essere cambiato ed anche esso dovrà a suo tempo andar a goder' il premio delle tante sue buone opere, così conviene che assicuriamo la casa per la nostra Pia Società che speriamo, a lui sopravvivrà, malgrado che noi auguriamo di cuore almeno 100 anni di vita."

<sup>50</sup> Batt. Chron.: May 1897.

<sup>51</sup> Batt. Chron.: Aug. 1897.



During the previous year, he had been sent out to Italy to celebrate the Beatification of a sixteenth century namesake Blessed Thaddeus McCarthy who was Beatified at Ivrea. Later still, we find him being sent to New York, where he found working for the poor Italians something of a trial.<sup>52</sup>

The need for a properly developed system of spiritual and personal formation or Novitiate, if the work in England was to develop on any sure foundation, had already become obvious. The problem that seemed to have dogged the project in England was the difficulty of providing a suitable Novice Master. Don Rua wrote in October that year:

Your should also know, by now, we have a subdeacon lined up as your Novice Master. We hope to have him ordained before he leaves, first as a deacon, then as a priest. It is a big sacrifice to let you have such a good man, but since it is for the novitiate, we accept it. He is also very gifted in Italian and Latin Literature as well as in Philosophy. I hope he will begin to understand English in a few months and to make himself understood.<sup>53</sup>

The qualification in Philosophy might seem a little strange for what, nowadays, might seem to be a job requiring mainly the skills of spiritual discernment. What has to be remembered is that before the stricter rules of Canon Law were applied, the Salesians began their Philosophical studies for the priesthood during the novitiate year.

The new Novice Master was Fr Aeneas Tozzi. He came from Lugo in the province of Ravenna. He was professed as a Salesian at the age of 17 and was ordained five years later in 1897.<sup>54</sup> The earliest arrangement was that the Community at Burwash was to remain under the Rectorship of Fr Macey at Battersea, with Fr Verwarde as Prefect of the House and Fr Tozzi as Novice Master.<sup>55</sup>

The Mission at Burwash had been founded in 1887 by Bishop Butt, when two wealthy Spanish ladies, 'Mme de los Heros' and 'Mme Murrietta' had begun to build a Spanish Gothic Church on their estate. The tower and nave were never finished and a rather ugly wooden porch formed the front of quite a finely valuted sanctuary area.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Batt. Chron.: Sept. 1896. See also ML. SDB. GB. 7.10.1904. Rua - Macey.

<sup>53</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 6.10.1897. Rua - Macey: "Sarai pure già informato che per Burwash è destinato per maestro dei novizi certo suddiacono che speriamo fare ordinare Diacono e poi anche Sacerdote prima di sua partenza. È un gran sacrificio che facciamo nel mandarvi un così buon soggetto; ma trattandosi di noviziato ci rassegniamo. Egli è pur molto valente in letteratura latina, italiana e filosofia; spero che in pochi mesi arriverà a capire e farsi capire in inglese."

<sup>54</sup> Profession Book (Hereafter PF.) SDB. GB. 'Tozzi'

<sup>55</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 21.11.97. Rua - Macey.

<sup>56</sup> Noonan, p. 98.

The Mission was originally administered by Fr John Cooney who took over from Fr Galeran at Wandsworth, when he was forced to resign. Both he and Fr T. Gordon Goodwin who followed him found it almost impossible to live, after the departure of Mme Murrietta, who supplied the priest's needs herself. There were about 50 Catholics, mostly former estate workers and about 12 Catholic children who attended the little elementary school about a mile and a quarter from the church.<sup>57</sup>

Since it was obvious that this tiny community could not support a priest, there was little objection in the Southwark Chapter, when Bishop Bourne suggested handing it over to the Salesians as a novitiate house. Beside the Church there was a Presbytery, a small grave yard, and some space for a garden. It was on this land attached to the house that the Salesians began to build according to an amateur design produced by Brother Aloysius Hawarden, quite a talented art student. It consisted of two storeys, the upper one containing a dormitory, the lower, the dining room and study. Fr Noonan left us this amusing account:

The building did not take long as it was only one brick in thickness. The wonder is that it was not blown down in the winter gales! When it was complete the builders who had been using a window, still incomplete, as an entrance to the interior, suddenly discovered that the architect had been so economical that he had forgotten to put in his plan a doorway for ingress and egress.<sup>58</sup>

Until the opening of Burwash, Fr Bonavia had acted both as Novice Master and Prefect of Studies at Battersea. The ideas of training novices while they took part in the work of the Society at the Mother House had been the original pattern of formation in Turin. But under the pressure of increased numbers and the threat of interference by the Archbishop, Don Bosco had been forced to set up separate Novitiate Houses. The same process of separating the novices took place in England when under the restrictions introduced by the Sacred Congregation for Religious in 1910, novices were forbidden to engage in the work of their societies or to do serious secular studies.<sup>59</sup> This pattern of separation from the main work of the society had already begun at Burwash.

The problem of finding a suitable Novice Master was not solved for long, because in 1902, after a crisis in the South Africa house, Fr Tozzi was transferred to Cape Town, a tribute, no doubt to his considerable drive and energy.

During his tenure of office at Burwash Fr Tozzi had corresponded

<sup>57</sup> *Catholic Directory, 1897* (London, 1897), p. 281.

<sup>58</sup> Noonan, pp. 100-101.

<sup>59</sup> *Codex Iuris Canonici*, can. 565 § 3, and S.C. Rel. dec. 27 Aug. 1910.

quite regularly with the Superiors in Italy, especially with Don Giulio Barberis, who was in charge of novitiates and Don Durando, the Provincial. He had, indeed, faced a difficult task as Novice Master in a foreign country and naturally wrote home about his difficulties.

First of all, despite his other qualifications, he did not speak English. His companion was Fr Verwarde who was effectively Superior and Parish Priest and who did not speak any Italian. Fr Tozzi wrote:

...he made his Novitiate in France and was, then, assistant to the novices, hence he was one of the first to go to Oran where he was made prefect.<sup>60</sup>

One of the main features of the problem was that Fr Tozzi had come from Italy [where the printed text of the Salesian Rule was well known] to a country where no English edition of the Rule had yet been published [first edition 1907] and where very few of the Salesians knew any Italian and in any case, had been brought up in a living tradition without much direct reference to the Rule Book. Since a major part of his task was to teach the novices the Rule of the Society, he had, one suspects, something of an uphill struggle.

He felt further isolated by the fact that not all the novices were at Burwash, because some had to teach in the elementary schools in Battersea, to prepare for their Teaching Qualification. This meant that, in general, the novices at Burwash were those who were very young, or those who were unable to study. It, therefore, proved a really difficult task trying to teach them Latin, Philosophy and the rest of the curriculum alone, while having himself to struggle with a foreign language. Further, the burden of trying to provide financially for the Novitiate appears to have fallen on him as well. He even seems to have resorted to trying to interest local Protestant gentry families, who must have been somewhat surprised, at becoming Co-operators and receiving the *Salesian Bulletin*.<sup>61</sup>

In the face of all these difficulties, Fr Tozzi was also very pessimistic about the possibility of cultivating good Salesian vocations in what was, he felt, a totally alien environment. He wrote:

In these countries, which have been Protestant for so long, [Catholics] live out every aspect of their lives and experience in every relationship, contact with that religion which brings death to any Christian vitality. Even Catholic schools are usually mixed and lack not just Catholic books but any really educational books, hence wordy reading material,

<sup>60</sup> ASC. 3463 B7 (Burwash 389) Tozzi - Barberis: "...fu novizio in Francia, poi assistente dei novizi, quindi dei primi che andarono ad Oran dove parmi fu prefetto."

<sup>61</sup> ASC. 3462 B6 (Burwash 389) Tozzi - Barberis.

often of a voluptuous type is widespread. The comforts of well-to-do life must not be missing in the English family, hence this is not fertile ground for vocations to religious life or even for educators. In Battersea, up till now... they have sought to work with material which in itself was in general already defective...<sup>62</sup>

Fr Tozzi's rather pessimistic outlook combined with a determined and somewhat impatient temperament meant that, although he was a very strong man in a crisis, yet he had little hope for or belief in the English people, which could have helped him inspire the efforts of his novices and later of his fellow Salesians.

Though Fr Tozzi left for South Africa in the summer of 1902, by the following November Don Rua had still been unable to find a successor, 'so Fr Brown will have to take over as Novice Master and Fr Campana as Rector and P.P.'.<sup>63</sup>

In the following year Don Rua wrote to Fr Macey to insist that there must be both a Rector and Novice Master at Burwash,

because if the latter, has also to be the Rector as well as Master of Novices he will no longer be in a position to hear confessions.<sup>64</sup>

The need to distinguish the Rector from the confessor had caused Don Rua enormous heartache, for he found his deepest loyalties in conflict. As Don Bosco's immediate successor, he was regarded by many Salesians primarily as the keeper of the tradition, not its interpreter. At the turn of the century, he found himself forced by the highest ecclesiastical authorities to break with one of Don Bosco's most hallowed practices, that of the Salesian Superiors acting both as Rector of the house and ordinary confessor for many of the Salesians and the boys.

The peculiar thing about the confession at Valdocco consisted particularly in the fact that Don Bosco, the Confessor, tended also to be the father, the friend, the confidante, the guide, the ideal of the young

<sup>62</sup> ASC. 3463 C6 (Burwash 389) Tozzi - Barberis 22.1.1898: "Questi paesi da tanto tempo protestanti, vivono in tutto, e subiscono in ogni rapporto della vita, il contatto di questa religione che dà morte ad ogni cristiana vitalità. Anche la scuola cattolica in generale o spesso mista, manca di libri cattolici non solo, ma educativi... quindi la lettura mondana spesso voluttuosa è generale. I comodi di una vita agiata non devono mancare nella famiglia inglese. Quindi non è campo fertile di vocazioni religiose tale educazione. In Battersea, finora [...] hanno cercato lavorare questa materia per se in generale già viziata."

<sup>63</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 22.11.1902. Rua - Macey: "Speravamo mandarvi il maestro dei novizi ed ora che sarebbe stato prossimo alla partenza, lo dobbiam mandar Direttore in una casa che altrimenti si dovrebbe chiudere. Così D. Brown dovrà essere il maestro dei novizi e D. Campana il Direttore e Parroco."

<sup>64</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 4.3.1903. Rua - Macey: "...giacchè se il maestro dei novizi deve pur fare il Direttore non potrà più confessare."

people there, even in the ordinary life of every day...<sup>65</sup>

The fatherly and filial confidence which did not distinguish much between confession and other moments, undoubtedly could have led to some uncomfortable situations. In the case of Don Bosco, as far as one can tell, it favoured a most remarkable spiritual cohesion. This has to be seen as one of the main aims which Don Bosco desired to achieve, and was a means of reaching the supreme purpose of Christian education and thus guarantee of taking the boys on the road that leads to eternal salvation.<sup>66</sup>

We can see from this explanation by Fr Stella the centrality that this practice had assumed in the pedagogy of Don Bosco. To depart from this would be seen as the most serious form of betrayal.

In 1899 a decree of the Holy Office forbade Salesian Rectors in Rome to hear the confessions of their pupils.

According to the Holy Office, this was to safeguard the liberty of the penitents, and to prevent possible suspicion concerning the directorship of the superior. Fearing that this was the thin end of the wedge, Don Rua sought to temporise. Then, a second decree of April 24th 1901 explicitly forbade all Salesian Superiors to hear the confessions of anyone within their community. Torn between two loyalties, Fr Rua appealed, only to be called to Rome, where he had to submit to a personal reprimand from the Holy Office, followed by a command to leave Rome immediately.<sup>67</sup>

This departure from Don Bosco's practice caused much anguish especially among the older Salesians. Don Rua was faced with a protest demonstration of Salesians lining up outside his door for confession and having to close the door in their faces.

This event provoked Fr Macey to seek clarification of the meaning of the decree, which Don Rua had been required to publish and enforce without hesitation, explanation or comment.

I have received the decree of the sixth of the present month and I would like, for my guidance, to ask for a few clarifications on the following points: Does *superior sive major sive minor* include only the Provincial

<sup>65</sup> P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella Storia della Religiosità Cattolica*, Rome, 1981, vol. 2, pp. 310: "La singolarità della confessione a Valdocco sta specialmente nel fatto che Don Bosco confessore tendeva a essere il padre, l'amico, il confidente, la guida, l'ideale dei giovani già nella vita ordinaria di ogni giorno."

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 311: "La confidenza paterna e filiale che non distingueva molto tra confessione e altri momenti senza dubbio poteva dare adito a inconvenienti, ma nel caso di Don Bosco, a quanto sembra, favoriva una coesione spirituale singolarissima, che è da considerare come uno dei fini che Don Bosco desiderava raggiungere per conseguire lo scopo supremo della educazione cristiana e perciò la garanzia di condurre i ragazzi sulla strada della salvezza eterna."

<sup>67</sup> M. WIRTH, *Don Bosco and the Salesians*, New York, 1

and the Rector or every member of the House Chapter; or every priest member of the community...<sup>68</sup>

This crisis was resolved at considerable personal cost to Don Rua and the young Society, just as Rome dictated. As such, the ripples had even reached as far as England, where it put considerable pressure on tiny communities like Burwash, to find a suitable confessor. Even the compromise suggested by Don Rua, where the Novice Master could still hear confessions was strictly irregular, as became obvious when the new Code of Canon Law was published.

### **Cape Town 1897**

The second new foundation began in 1897 in Cape Town in South Africa. Bishop John Leonard, Vicar Apostolic of the Western District, using his friends at Propaganda, managed to persuade Don Rua to open a technical Institute for orphans in Cape Town, as a secondary follow up to the orphanages of the Nazareth Sisters which received the boys at an earlier age.

In 1896, Don Rua informed Fr Macey,

Next October, we shall probably need English personnel for the Cape of Good Hope. Artisans would do nicely, if they are all you can spare.<sup>69</sup>

The work began in the following year with Fr Barni in charge, but one of the major problems was a misunderstanding with the bishop about who was to provide the machinery for the Trades School, and more especially for the printing section which the bishop wanted to publish the main Catholic South African Magazine. There was a further misunderstanding about how the work was to be maintained financially. Bishop Leonard seemed to assume that the Salesians would provide their own machinery and be able to maintain themselves by the sale of their work from the workshops, until they could receive Government grants for the orphans. Further, he insisted on them paying him for the use of the ramshackle old house in which they lived.

The situation was very difficult from the very beginning, because Fr

<sup>68</sup> ASC. 3652 D8 Macey - Durando 13 July 1901: "Ho ricevuto il decreto dell' sesto corrente e vorrei per mia norma, [sic] domandarle schiarimenti sui punti seguenti *Superior sive Major sive Minor* include solo l'Ispettore e il Direttore oppure a) ogni membro del Capitolo della casa b) ogni sacerdote membro della Comunità."

<sup>69</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 10.3.1896. Rua - Macey: "Probabilmente all'Ottobre prossimo, avremo bisogno di un po' di personale inglese da spedire al Capo di B. Speranza; fossero anche degli artigiani andrebbe bene."



Barni arrived without equipment, money or qualified personnel. Inevitably with his community and orphans to feed, he drifted further and further into debt. The bishop was totally unyielding on any financial arrangements or on Fr Barni's desire to take care in orphans of different racial backgrounds, who were also cared for by the Nazareth Sisters. Things went from bad to worse, and when the equipment arrived and work began, it was still almost impossible to make ends meet, let alone pay off the debts. The result was that in 1902, given the wartime inflation of prices, Fr Barni faced bankruptcy proceedings from which Bishop Leonard refused to save him until he had been finally utterly humiliated.

In this emergency Fr Tozzi was sent out to take his place. Fr Barni, a very genial and open hearted character, returned to England, only to find himself asked to go out to Jamaica to pioneer an agricultural school there.

The work in Cape Town did not come under Fr Macey's authority until 1902 when he became Provincial, and in the years that followed he was often asked by Don Rua to supply an English Salesian to help Fr Tozzi.

We are hoping to send Fr Tozzi, a priest, a cleric and a cook as soon as possible. I am convinced, he not only needs help but a lot of help, seeing that he is ill, as we have been informed by telegram.<sup>70</sup>

In another letter he encouraged Fr Macey to help Fr Tozzi.

I am glad to hear that you are taking it on yourself to send a cleric to Fr Tozzi. Make sure you choose some one on whom you can rely, for he has a long journey ahead of him and once at his destination, he will be in a house that is so remote, that it allows no possibility of a change.<sup>71</sup>

In fact, Fr Macey declined to take much responsibility for the house in Cape Town not, one suspects, just because of the immense distance involved, but also because Fr Tozzi had a rather prickly character and by the frequency of his communications with Turin he seemed able to exert pressure there. Don Rua wrote:

Regarding your suggestion that Fr Bologna should carry out the visit there, he tells me he cannot do so. He has to give more attention than in the past to his own houses, (which are so scattered) whilst looking after the business associated with our properties. In the meantime, I had a

<sup>70</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 29.11.1904. Rua - Macey: "Per Don Tozzi speriamo di spedire presto un prete, un chierico ed un cuoco. Sono persuaso che egli ha bisogno di aiuto non solo, ma di molto aiuto attesoche è ammalato secondo che annunzia un telegramma che di là abbiamo ricevuto."

<sup>71</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 21.2.1904. Rua - Macey: "Sono pur contento della notizia che mi dai che t'incarichi di mandar a D. Tozzi un chierico. Converrà scegliere uno su cui si possa veramente contare, dovendo fare un viaggio così lungo e stare in una casa così isolata che non ha comodità di fare cambi di personale."



letter yesterday again from Fr Tozzi in which he repeats his request for a visit from Fr Provincial adducing the advantages it would bring.<sup>72</sup>

Despite the fact that he was asking for a visitation, Fr Tozzi had been far from happy to come under Fr Macey's province.

At London they are saying that Don Macey is our Provincial, I have not had any part in the proposal, nor have I received any official news. Permit me, within the bounds of obedience to say that, personally I like to depend on Turin and on you who desire our welfare and have followed the misfortunes of the house and more than that, whom we need.<sup>73</sup>

In fact, Fr Tozzi remained in South Africa until he succeeded Fr Scaloni in 1927, building a splendid new institute and beginning the work at Lansdowne.

### **Chertsey and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians**

Bishop Francis Bourne was also instrumental in the opening of the house at Chertsey. In 1898 he bought Eastworth House with the aim of providing pastoral care for the 30 or so poor Italians who lived there.

At the beginning of 1900 the Salesian Fathers began to come down each week from Battersea. Fr Hawarden and Bro. William Harrod came each Saturday morning and prepared the house and chapel for the Sunday. They lived, each weekend, in Eastworth House, provided and cooked for themselves. Each Sunday evening they locked up the house and returned to Battersea. They also served the Holloway Sanatorium at Virginia Water.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> ML. ADB. GB. 11.4.1904. Rua - Macey: "Riguarda a D. Bologna, che tu proponi per visitare quella casa, mi rispose che non può dovendo ora più che pel passato attendere alle sue case cotanto disperse ed agli affari per la difesa delle proprietà. Intanto ancor' jeri io ricevetti lettera da D. Tozzi, in cui nuovamente si raccomanda per la visita del suo Ispettore, che riuscirebbe molto vantaggiosa."

<sup>73</sup> ASC. 3223. A4. Tozzi - Rev. P.: "A Londra si dice che Don Macey è nostro Ispettore; io però non ho fatto parola in proposito, poiché non ho ricevuto alcun avviso ufficiale... Mi permetto però nei limiti dell'ubbidienza di dirle che personalmente amo di dipendere da Torino e da Lei che mi intende bene, e che ha seguito le traversie della casa..."

<sup>74</sup> SDB. GB. *The Chronicle of the English Province* (Hereafter Eng. Chron.), p. 34.

This Chronicle is a compilation of the Battersea Chronicle (suitably edited to avoid any embarrassing incidents or comments) and entries from *the Salesian Bulletin*. It covers the years from 1887-1939.

The *Catholic Directory* for 1899 notes the Mission at Eastworth House, served by Fr S. Banfi from Womersley.

In 1901 it noted the resident priest Fr W. Alton and in 1902 that it was served temporarily from Battersea.

This work at Chertsey was to develop much further when the Salesian Sisters, having come to Battersea, decided to take over Eastworth House as their own novitiate.

The Salesian Sisters or Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, as they are called, arrived in England on April 7th 1902 and were met at Victoria Station and brought to Battersea where they lodged, in the Orbel St. group of Houses vacated by the Salesians.

[According to the Salesian Chronicle] They came with the object of taking over the work of the refectories and kitchens also supervising the laundry and linen room. The Rev. Fr. Bonavia was appointed their Spiritual Director... On April 16th some of the sisters went to Chertsey to see about opening a novitiate there. His Lordship Bishop Bourne came to Battersea on April 24th to pay them a visit and give them his blessing.<sup>75</sup>

Fr Macey informed Don Rua of the Sisters' arrival on April 17th 1902. They were led by Sister Adele Ghezzi who received congratulations from Don Rua on the new field which Providence had opened from them in London. Their little Community was soon strengthened by a group of exiles from France expelled under the anti-clerical Law of July 1st 1901.<sup>76</sup>

By February 1902, Don Rua had approved the Sisters' purchase of the house at Chertsey and the building programme:

In view of the great good the Reverend Daughters of Mary Help of Christians can do in that town taking into account the desire expressed to us by His Lordship, the Bishop of the diocese. Considering the small amount of money involved (seven thousand francs) permission is granted to build at Chertsey in accordance with the plan approved to-day, on condition that no debts are incurred and the expenses are paid out of your own creditable funds.<sup>77</sup>

The Juridical style of the letter and its contents made obvious the rather special relationship which existed between the Salesians and the Sisters up till 1906.

This letter emphasised the fact that,

<sup>75</sup> Eng. Chron., p. 101.

<sup>76</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 16.9.1903. Rua - Suor Adele Ghezzi. See J. McMANNERS, *Church and State in France 1870-1914*, London, 1972, p. 128.

<sup>77</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 16.2.1903. Rua - Londra Chertsey: "In vista del gran bene che si potrà fare dalle RR. Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice in questa città; Tenendo conto del desiderio espressoci da S.E. Rev. Il Vescovo della Diocesi; Considerando la tenuità della spesa occorrente Fr. 7000, dico settemila; si permette la fabbrica di Chertzey (sic) secondo il disegno oggi approvato, a condizione che non si abbia a contrarre debiti e facendo fronte alle spesi con proprie risorse della carità ecc."

...the union of the two congregations was ensured by this common direction. The Sisters' Rule stated; 'The Institute is under the Superior General of the Society of St Francis of Sales who is its Major Superior...' In practice, the Rector Major delegated his power to a Salesian priest who was given the title of Director General of the Institute and was in turn locally represented by the Salesian Provincial. The internal affairs of the Institute however remained completely in the hands of the Mother General and her Council.<sup>78</sup>

Don Bosco had wanted this arrangement partly as a protection for the Sisters against the interference which might come from being only a locally recognised diocesan Congregation and because he was unwilling to try to submit the Sisters' Rule for approval by Rome until they were so well established and widespread that the Congregation for Religious would be forced to accept them without major modification.

In England, Fr Bonavia was appointed as their Director, a fitting tribute to his gentle disposition and his wise judgement. He was born in Gemola, in the Province of Cuneo on the 26th Oct. 1865 and entered the Oratory on Jan. 10th 1878. He made his novitiate at San Benigno in 1881, receiving the cassock from Don Bosco himself. He made his perpetual profession 7.10.1882 and was ordained on 26.5.1887.<sup>79</sup> He was acknowledged as a scholarly type and was put in charge of teaching the students Philosophy and Theology. So well thought of was he, that for the year 1892-3 he was recalled to the Oratory to be Prefect of Studies there. Unlike Fr Rabagliati, who never preached in English, Fr Bonavia was often on supply or preaching retreats and conferences. He took his duties, as the Sisters' director, very seriously but his failing health soon began to take its toll.

On January 20th, 1904, after he had said Mass,

he was found by Fr Goy seated on the sacristy steps. 'Ah!', he said, 'I am done. My "pipes" are giving way.'<sup>80</sup>

The chronicler took great delight in describing in vivid detail his pious end.

...He did not go to bed, but remained seated in an arm-chair, propped up with pillows. Although breathing was extremely difficult, he gave himself up to fervent prayer and pious ejaculation. Again and again he repeated the prayers almost audibly. He lingered on through Friday, day and night visibly sinking but not deterred from his pious purpose of

<sup>78</sup> M. Wirth, p. 355.

<sup>79</sup> Profession Book: Bonavia.

<sup>80</sup> Batt. Chron.: Jan. 1904.

fervent prayer. Early on Saturday morning he asked for Holy Viaticum with evident piety. At about 11.30 he enquired what the time might be, and on being informed, he exclaimed, "It is nearly finished. Home at last!"... At 11.50 the Brother noticed the signs of immediate death and hastily summoned Don Macey and Don Kelly who brought the Holy Oils with him. Extreme Unction was administered and whilst Don Macey said the prayers for a departing soul, this humble servant of God breathed his last. One last affectionate look cast at his superior and companion Don Macey and his pupil Don Kelly and those beautifully expressive eyes were closed for ever.<sup>81</sup>

Don Rua had been aware of Fr Bonavia's worsening condition and had mentioned him twice in his correspondence during 1903,<sup>82</sup> advising Fr Macey to look after 'this good confrère's health, and after the good of your own house, where his presence seems so singularly valuable and edifying'.<sup>83</sup>

Just after his death he wrote again:

No sooner had I received Fr Rabagliati's letter and your card with the disturbing news of Fr Bonavia's grave condition than a telegram arrived announcing his death. The sorrow it caused me is as deep as your own and I offer you my heartfelt sympathy. I know that you will pray much for his soul. We will do the same... I cannot praise you too highly for all the attention you showered on him in the effort to avert the catastrophe. God will reward you.<sup>84</sup>

The death of Fr Bonavia left the Sisters without a Director and Fr Macey had to provide as best he could. First of all Fr Fevre, one of the French exiles, acted as Chaplain, then Fr Brownrigg acted as Chaplain to the sisters at Chertsey.<sup>85</sup> In 1907 he asked to go to Turin to do some further studies and it was not long before Don Rua was inquiring what arrangements Fr Macey was making for the sisters:

I had a letter saying, that you are thinking of ceasing to make provision for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. If there is some problem let me know about it.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 25.2.1903. Rua - Macey.

<sup>83</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 23.7.1903. Rua - Macey: "...abbi solo riguardo alla salute di quel caro confratello ed al bene della casa tua (in cui la sua presenza parmi essere di notevole utilità ed edificazione...")

<sup>84</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 26.1.1904. Rua - Macey: "Il dolore che ne provo non è inferiore al vostro e vi comunico le mie vive condoglianze — Spero che pregherete molto in suffragio dell'anima sua come pregheremo anche noi molto; [...] Lodo in gran maniera le sollecite cure che gli avete prodigato per impedirne la catastrofe e Dio ve ne renderà merito."

<sup>85</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 20.12.1904. Rua - Macey; regarding Fr Brownrigg.

<sup>86</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 2.10.1908. Rua - Macey: "P.S. Mi si scrive che forse tu pensi abbandonare la cura delle Figlie di M. Ausil. — Se mai vi fosse qualche ostacolo fammelo sapere."

By a decree of the Congregation of Religious in 1906, the traditional arrangements between the Salesians and the Sisters which treated the two congregations almost as one, under the Superior General of the Salesians, were finally dissolved. Hence Fr Macey was unwilling to make provision for the Sisters. But Don Rua believed the connection between the Salesians and the Sisters to be most important, whatever the law.

### **East Hill, Farnborough and Southwark**

Three other foundations date from this early period of expansion: the parish at East Hill, near Wandsworth, the house at Farnborough in Hampshire, and the hostel at St. George's Home, Southwark.

The Mission at East Hill began as a small public chapel and day-school, which was opened on February 22nd 1903, at 96, North Side, Wandsworth Common. This was an old Huguenot house but remained attached to the parish of Wandsworth. It served as the residence for the Wandsworth Prison Chaplain, Fr Hawarden, who was also its first superior. Gradually a small school was developed in the house and it also served as the first home of the French Salesian exiles, who came to England in 1903. A church of St Mary Magdalene was built, its foundation stone being laid on Sept 8th 1905 by Canon St John, and was opened on the 25th October 1906. The land and house had been given by one of Southwark's most generous benefactresses, Miss Ellis. It took some years to pay off the debt for building the Church, though this was done under Fr Tim O'Connor who was Parish Priest for 14 years. The school was not a success, due partly to the poor quality of the building and also to the lack of adequate playing space, which meant it could not be recognised by the London County Council. It was closed in 1923, and in 1924 the Salesians withdrew from East Hill, giving back the church and Mission to the diocese.<sup>87</sup>

St George's Home for Working Boys had been founded in 1892 by Canon Edward St John who was diocesan Treasurer and in charge of the Crusade of Rescue. He hoped to provide a form of intermediate care for boys who were either leaving the industrial schools or reformatories or whom magistrates felt would benefit from some supervision. It had moved from its original premises in Blackfriars Road to new premises, with its

<sup>87</sup> Batt. Chron.: March 1903. See also B.W. KETH, *Historical Notes on the English Catholic Missions*, London, 1907.

And SAA. (Southwark Archdiocesan Archive) *Bishop Amigo's Visitation Notes: East Hill*.

own indoor swimming pool in 1900. This was situated at 5-17 Westminster Bridge Road.<sup>88</sup>

In 1902 it was offered to the Salesians but Don Rua was slow to accept it.

As for St George's Home there are problems of staffing.<sup>89</sup>

The matter, however, received more favourable reports during 1903. In December Don Rua wrote:

About taking on the house at St. George's Home I'm sure that you have received our reply from another member of the Superior Chapter. We were generally favourable to you doing so at the beginning of Lent.<sup>90</sup>

Fr Virginio Campana became the first Superior. He was born in Brescia in 1873 and entered the diocesan Seminary in 1891. He became a novice with the Salesians in the following year and was professed in 1893. He completed his degree in Philosophy in Rome in 1896 and came to England in 1900, having spent some time in Portugal. He was ordained by Bishop Bourne in 1901.<sup>91</sup> At first he had worked in Burwash, then in 1904 he was appointed to St George's Home. For someone of his academic background it does not appear to have been a successful appointment. During the year the community suffered two mysterious deaths. First, a novice, James McNamee, developed meningitis and died on 28th May 1904, and a cleric, George Saley, died in similar circumstances on 19th June 1905.

In May of that year

Fr Campana had to undergo a very serious operation at the Bolingbroke Hospital. His life was in danger, for a while, but by the Feast of Mary Help of Christians he had recovered sufficiently, and was able to attend the services. He then went down to Bournemouth to recuperate.<sup>92</sup>

Perhaps the meningitis which caused the deaths of the two younger Salesians had also affected Fr Campana. The presence of an indoor swimming pool might well suggest a source for the infection.

Whatever was the case, he seems to have become very unsettled. He went to Italy for his retreat in August 1906 and in the following year was

<sup>88</sup> *Catholic Directory 1900* (London, 1900). See Southwark entry.

<sup>89</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 22.11.1902. Rua - Macey: "Riguardo alla casa 'St. George's Home' vi sono le difficoltà del personale."

<sup>90</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 27.12.1903. Rua - Macey: "Quanto all'assumere la casa detta St. George's Home avrai già ricevuto da un altro membro del Cap. Sup. la risposta favorevole pel principio di Quaresima."

<sup>91</sup> Profession Book: Campana. For the deaths of two confrères: *Salesiani Defunti*, Rome, 1986, entries for the 28th May and 19th June.

<sup>92</sup> Batt. Chron.: May 1905.



back with his parents, apparently sick.<sup>93</sup> Then there is an ominous silence in the records, broken only by an undated note from Don Rua marked 'Confidential':

Any news of Fr Campana! I have been told by someone that he is living in that city — 19, Greenmore Rd. Chelsea — It would be fine if anything can be done to save him.<sup>94</sup>

The apparent disappearance of Fr Campana suggests that we face a phenomenon which is, perhaps, more familiar to-day. He seems to have become ill, and disorientated, and ultimately left the Salesian Society and the priesthood and was married irregularly. Though Fr Noonan (who evidently knew Fr Campana) tells the story in his history it was deleted by his censors to avoid scandal.<sup>95</sup>

After Fr Campana's departure Fr Thomas Giltenan was appointed Superior, but the difficulties of working with delinquents, especially in a situation where there was little or no playing space, together with the lack of control, (which in the last analysis remained with Canon St John) meant that, despite the help Salesian Sisters brought to the domestic situation, the withdrawal of the community became inevitable. By 1907 it was back in the hands of Canon St John.<sup>96</sup>

### **Farnborough**

The impulse to work for the very poor, especially orphans and children in need, was also expressed in the foundation of the House at Farnborough in Hampshire. The build up of the military presence at Aldershot as part of Prince Albert's army reforms, after the debacle of the Crimean War, meant that the problems of prostitution and orphans in the area became acute. St Joseph's Convent at Aldershot was built as part of the Church's response to this need. After a somewhat faltering attempt in 1898 to found a home for orphans, Bishop John Baptist Cahill asked the Salesians to do something for the orphans of his diocese. The Boer War had made the need even more obvious around Aldershot. Bishop John Baptist Cahill sent a letter of appeal to the whole diocese of Portsmouth in which he described the scope of the work:

<sup>93</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 2.8.1906.

<sup>94</sup> ML. SDB. GB. (No date) 'Confidenziale': "Di D. Campana non hai notizie? Qualcuno mi assicura che trovasi in codesta città. — 19 Greenmore Road, Chelsea. — Se si potesse salvare andrebbe molto bene."

<sup>95</sup> Noonan, p. 214.

<sup>96</sup> *Catholic Directory 1907* (London, 1907). See Southwark entry.



We needed a home where boys could be taught trades and where in case of necessity, the deserted boys of soldiers and sailors could be sent without limit. Without losing a single day, the Salesian Fathers purchased a site in the vicinity of North Camp, Aldershot. As soon as they obtained permission in July they commenced the work of adapting and building, so that they might receive orphans in the month of September. Their work will no doubt, prosper, I have no longer before me, the constant dread of seeing helpless orphans of soldiers and sailors taken into Protestant houses with the certainty of the loss of their faith.<sup>97</sup>

In 1854, the government had purchased three large tracts of land in Aldershot and its neighbourhood to establish a military camp on a very extensive scale, the camps proper being divided by the Basingstoke canal into North Camp and South Camp.<sup>98</sup>

In 1890 the ranges of wooden huts which had originally formed the camp were replaced by permanent brick structures to accommodate 20,000 soldiers and their dependents. Consequent on the establishment of the camp the village of Aldershot grew into a considerable town with a population in 1901 of 30,974 inhabitants. Similarly, because of the growth of North Camp the population of Farnborough grew from 700 in 1861 to 10,000 by 1911.

The Catholic parish of Farnborough was opened in 1887 by the French community of Premonstratensian Canons at St Michael's Priory, and Mass was also held in North Camp at the School chapel, Peabody Road on Sundays. When, however, the enclosed Benedictines of Solemnnes took over the Priory, in 1891, the parish was served from St. Joseph's, Aldershot by Fr A.G. Clarke. He was followed by Fr J.W. Doran in 1898 who changed the title of the parish to St. Patrick's, Peabody Road.<sup>99</sup>

When the Salesians took over the parish in the first week of July 1901, they opened both an orphanage in an old tin factory and by the 3rd February of the following year had opened a new church of Mary, Help of Christians in North Camp. The local newspaper, *the Aldershot News* described it thus:

Last Sunday the beautiful church dedicated to Our Lady Help of Christians which has just been completed in Queens Road was opened

<sup>97</sup> Noonan, p. 206.

<sup>98</sup> *Victoria County History: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, London, 1911, vol. 4, p. 2ff.

<sup>99</sup> See *Catholic Directory* 1895 Farnborough entry: St Michael's Priory in the hands of the Canons of Prémontre.

1898, St Michael's in the hands of the Benedictines and the School Chapel, Peabody Rd. served from Aldershot.

1900, St Patrick's Peabody Rd. Fr Doran.

1902, St Patrick's Queens Rd. Salesians.

1903, Our Lady Help of Christians, Queen's Rd.

with the imposing ceremony of Pontifical High Mass by the bishop of Portsmouth.

The bishop referred to the twofold motive of the advent of the Salesian Fathers at Farnborough, this was, in the first place, to found an orphanage and secondly, to build a church.

The church of Our Lady Help of Christians is a brick structure, plainly but artistically decorated in harmonious colours, its architect being Bro. Austin SJ. The altar and sanctuary looked very well with their flowers and lights and with a handsome and artistic tapestry behind.<sup>100</sup>

In July 1902, a reporter from the other local newspaper, *Sheldrake's Military Gazette*, paid a visit to the Orphanage, or Salesian Institute. He reported that he had

...last Tuesday had the opportunity of going over the orphanage for poor Catholic waifs and those sons of sore stricken Roman Catholic parents. The old tin factory has been turned to excellent account and the home is now one that is comfortable in every respect. There are thirty boys in the house at the present time, mostly of school age but as they advance in years, workshops are to be erected on the site of the buildings and each boy will be taught a trade that will benefit him for the struggle of life.

A glance at the lads at play just before the school hour on Tuesday proved that they were a very happy and contented set of little chaps but they sadly lacked a few sets of cricket materials and articles for outdoor games.

The lads are sent from all parts of the Portsmouth diocese and very many are sent in rags and tatters and some of these come from the Aldershot Mission. All these are fed clothed and educated but it is a very hard struggle for Fr Marsh and Fr Domanski as the home is sustained solely by voluntary contributions. The new chapel has been erected by the side of the house and is nicely decorated. There is a fine organ and the congregation amount to 200 on Sundays.<sup>101</sup>

The congregation served by the Salesians would appear from the Baptismal registers to be mostly of Irish descent, though it is notable that most often only one parent had an Irish name. With the advent of the Salesians it would appear that something of a change in pastoral styles emerged. Whereas in the years from 1888 till 1901 the average number of baptisms was about 11 a year, in 1903, the first full year of Salesian administration, it reached a sudden peak of 41 and averaged thereafter an annual total of above 30. Similarly the Salesians began to celebrate weddings in the Church and they numbered and average of about 10 each

<sup>100</sup> *Aldershot News*, 8 Feb. 1902.

<sup>101</sup> *Sheldrake's Military Gazette*, 18 July 1902.

year from 1903 till the out break of war.<sup>102</sup>

The problem of how this orphanage could be supported was the most pressing of its difficulties. Fr Ernest Marsh was appointed the first Superior with Fr W.J. Kelly as the Military Chaplain at North Camp. While Fr Kelly's salary helped to maintain the community, the orphans were supposed to be maintained by appeals to charity. The Salesians had permission to solicit alms throughout the diocese but this was eventually withdrawn, due to the objections of some wealthy Catholics. In 1902, in the local newspaper's commemorative edition to celebrate the royal accession, Fr Marsh appealed for funds for the support of 'the indigent children of soldiers and sailors'. How serious the difficulties were is evident from a letter from Don Rua to Fr Macey: 'As for the house at Farnborough keep it open for the present.'<sup>103</sup>

In 1906, Fr Marsh had been replaced as Rector as had been the military chaplain and Don Rua was anxious to get Fr Marsh for the work in Jamaica.<sup>104</sup> The further problem occurred of who to find who could act as military chaplain, who would come to no harm from association with soldiers.

As for the opportuneness of keeping the house at Farnborough or disposing of it. The comment in our Chapter meeting was that if the price received is so considerable, that the interest on it would be enough to maintain the orphans elsewhere, then you could sell it, but otherwise it would be inadvisable.

As for the improvements the Bishop wants, perhaps you could make provision for these gradually.<sup>105</sup>

From 1906-1910 Fr Muldoon was the Rector, but it was his successor Fr Aloysius Sutherland who in conjunction with Bishop Cotter, coadjutor then, Bishop of Portsmouth, transformed the work for Orphans or Salesian Institute, [the still visible name over the Queen's Rd. entrance in North Camp] to the Salesian College, Farnborough. As such it became a valuable resource for the diocese, acting as a junior seminary, also managing to

<sup>102</sup> See *Liber Matrimoniorum and Liber Baptizatorum, ecclesiae Sancti Michaelis apud Farnborough*, 1887-1908. (Fr Rector Salesian College, Reading rd. Farnborough, Hants.) Numbers of Baptisms for a particular year.

1897 - 9	1898 - 11	1899 - 14	1900 - 10	1901 - 12	1902 - 22
1903 - 41	1904 - 28	1905 - 45	1906 - 31	1907 - 30	1908 - 38

<sup>103</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 23.9.1906. Rua - Macey: "Quanto alla casa di Farnboro' parmi conveniente tenerla aperta per ora."

<sup>104</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 15.9.1906. Rua - Macey.

<sup>105</sup> ML. SDB. GB. 27.10.1906. Rua - Macey: "Riguardo alla convenienza di tenere o di alienare la casa di Farnboro' in Capitolo si disse che se puoi ricavare una somma considerevole in modo che l'interesse della vendita basti per sostenere altrove gli orfanelli potrai venderla, altrimenti non conviene."

establish itself financially, but it moved far from the original purpose of providing an institute for the education of the indigent children of soldiers and sailors.

### **Conclusion**

This period of expansion between 1898 and 1908 highlights some of the problems that the Salesian work had to face in trying to adapt itself to a new and largely alien environment.

Perhaps the most obvious problem lay in the somewhat tenuous connection which Fr Macey had with the original experience of the Oratory and the person of Don Bosco, which in those early years was the largely determinative influence on Salesian development. The presence of Frs Bonavia and Rabagliati and the support provided by Don Rua's letters undoubtedly helped to allay this difficulty, nonetheless, one can see quite important departures from Don Bosco's vision taking root in England.

In the person of Fr Tozzi, who was to be influential in the Province for nigh on 60 years, one notes a form of pessimism on the part of some of the Italian Salesians about whether the Salesian vocation could really be transplanted to the English scene, a pessimism which bred distrust and suspicion and eventually a degree of anti-Italian feeling among the English Salesians.

In the efforts to found works for the orphans in Cape Town, Southwark and Farnborough, we can see a persistent Salesian ideal surfacing, the desire to work for the poorest and most abandoned young people. The difficulties involved, in finding a secure financial basis and the right sort of people to do the work were evidently considerable.

In contrast, we note the development of the colleges at Battersea and Farnborough modelling themselves on the English grammar school, with the introduction of public examinations and perhaps, less positively, corporal punishment.

What perhaps was also significant because of its absence was any attempt to effectively adapt the original Oratory model of a youth or boys' club to the English scene.

All of these features were to have important implications in the years to follow.

## **THE VISION FADES: A CRISIS OF GROWTH 1908-1918**

Indeed, in its pure form, charismatic authority may be said to exist only in the process of originating. (Weber)

### **Running out of Charisma**

The years between 1908 and 1918 highlighted a crisis of growth in the Salesian Community in England, marked by the transition from the earlier period of foundation and growth to a period of apparent stagnation and indeed decline. Weber in his *Theory of Economic and Social Organization* described very clearly a model of organizational growth that may well prove to be of some use in interpreting this phenomenon.

In its pure form charismatic authority has a character specifically foreign to everyday routine structures. The social relationships directly involved are strictly personal, based on the validity and practice of charismatic personal qualities. If this is not to remain a purely transitory phenomenon, but to take on the character of a permanent relationship forming a stable community of disciples or a band of followers..., it is necessary for the character of the charismatic authority to become radically changed. Indeed, in its pure form, charismatic authority may be said to exist only in the process of originating. It cannot remain stable, but becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both.<sup>1</sup>

The transitory nature of charismatic authority and its inability to form a stable community of disciples would seem to be clearly reflected in the Salesian experience of this period. During these years, the English Province faced the first major slow-down or setback in its numerical growth and at a deeper level a growing crisis of leadership. The regime, based as it was largely on the personal charisma of Fr Macey, began to show very obvious signs of stagnation and a chronic inability to change. After the early death of Fr McKiernan, Fr Macey had inspired, almost single-handedly, the foundation and development of the Salesians in England. Indeed, nearly all the early English Salesians were not only his pupils but had also benefited

<sup>1</sup> M. WEBER, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organisation*, London, 1947, T. PARSONS ed., § 143, p. 334.

from the free secondary education which he offered to those boys who expressed the desire to become priests. Hence, he had an undisputed personal charismatic authority based on his role as founder, benefactor and effectively father to a large group of his followers.

By the end of this period, Fr Macey had been Superior at Battersea for nigh on thirty years and was well into his sixties, hence it comes as no surprise that the dynamism with which he had originated the work, had gradually died down and that the inevitable peculiarities of such a personal regime had begun to show up as serious institutional weakness.

Using another analogy, Fr Macey seemed to find it increasingly difficult to allow the young men whom he had educated and whose spiritual guide he had been, to grow up and take independent responsibility for themselves and the vocation they had embraced. What can be seen are the tell-tale signs of stagnation and decay.

### **The extraordinary visitation of 1908**

Although the English houses had received regular visits from the Superior General, Don Rua in 1890, 1893, 1902 and 1906, these seem to have been primarily pastoral and personal and there is no formal record or report on them in the Salesian Archives. However, with the official Canonical Erection of Provinces throughout the society in 1902, a formal Visitation of every province became obligatory every 6 years. By 1908, therefore, since the first Provincial's six year term of office also came to an end that year, Father Paul Virion, the Provincial of France from 1900 to 1919, was appointed as Visitor with all the powers of the Superior General to report on the state of the Province and make recommendations to the Superior Chapter. His report provided the first critical and systematic evaluation of the work of the Salesians in England since their foundation.

Fr Virion was French, born in Strasbourg, on the 22nd December 1859. He had studied at the *Haute École* of Architecture in Paris and had become attracted to the work of the Salesian Oratory at Menilmontant. After his profession as a Salesian on May 31st 1888, he was ordained in 1891. His distinguished academic qualifications and somewhat unusual French background give his report a degree of balance and objectivity not always seen in the reports of some of the later Italian Visitors, often with a more limited perspective. His mortuary letter described him as being 'firm but gentle', qualities he certainly seems to have needed during his Visitation<sup>2</sup> because he represented the very first check or challenge by the

<sup>2</sup> E. VALENTINI, A. RODINÒ eds., *Dizionario Biografico dei Salesiani* (Torino, 1969). See entry for Don Paolo Virion.



legitimate ecclesiastical authority to the previously undisputed sway of Fr Macey.

He began his report by listing the five main houses, namely, Battersea, Burwash, Cape Town, Farnborough and East Hill and three dependent missions, Chertsey, and the Polish Mission, St Gregory's (the last two staffed by Polish Salesians in the Westminster diocese).<sup>3</sup>

He was not slow to point out the obvious imbalance between the houses and the problems associated with such a small scale organisation.

The Province has fifty perpetually professed members, twenty-five temporarily professed and nine novices. It is too small, that is to say, the number of houses is too restricted. The one at Cape Town is too far away. In England only Battersea is of any importance, the others are small and as a result, there are difficulties when certain confrères have to be changed.<sup>4</sup>

The distribution of confrères between the various houses which he listed in each of his house reports gave further point to his criticism. While Battersea had forty confrères and two novices, Burwash had eight and three novices, Farnborough seven and East Hill five. The fact that Battersea had double the total number of Salesians in all the other houses put together and that nearly all the English Salesians had been pupils there, gave an extraordinary personal influence to its superior, Fr Macey, who was also the Provincial.

The Provincial looks after the different houses with diligence (excepting that of Cape Town) and is much loved by nearly all his dependants, the greater part of whom were his pupils. It appears, however, that he shows a certain partiality and weakness for some of them. The Irish, on the other hand, do not show much confidence and complain that he does not like them and the same goes for the Coadjutors.<sup>5</sup>

Fr Virion also noted the characteristic sign of a charismatic regime, in that Fr Macey's personal predominance was not effectively balanced by the official constitutional machinery.

<sup>3</sup> ASC. S31 24(12) Inghilterra. Don P. Virion Visitatore, p. 1: "L'ispettoria conta 50 professi perpetui. 25 triennali 9 novizi (?) È troppo piccola cioè il numero delle case è troppo ristretto. Quella del Capo di Buona Speranza è molto distante; in Inghilterra non vi è che la Casa di Battersea importante. Le altre sono piccole e vi è difficoltà quando si dovrebbe cambiare di posto certi confratelli."

<sup>4</sup> E. CERIA, *Annali della Società Salesiana*, Vol. 3, Torino, 1946, p. 567.

<sup>5</sup> ASC. S31 24(12) Inghilterra, p. 1: "L'ispettore attende con impegno alle diverse Case (lasciando fuori quella di Cape Town) è molto amato della quasi generalità di suoi dipendenti. La maggior parte di loro furono suoi allievi. Sembra però che per taluni abbia qualche parzialità e debolezza. Gli irlandesi invece non dimostrano grande fiducia si lamentano che non le ami. Lo stesso i coadjutori."



The Provincial Chapter [a council of senior members]..., do not have any regular meetings, only gathering to discuss particular subjects. There is no freedom of discussion, the Provincial is absolute in his opinion and does not allow any contradiction.<sup>6</sup>

Given such an undisputed sway, Fr Macey's regime had developed its own peculiarities, based far more on his own limited experience and preferences than on any real understanding of the tradition or spirit of the Salesian Society at large, a fact which drew the criticism of the visitor.

There is a tendency in the Province to abandon the customs and the names in use in our Society in order to conform to the usages of the Religious Orders.<sup>7</sup>

The evidence Fr Virion produced for his analysis seems irrefutable.

Thus, the *Ispettore* is called 'Fr Provincial', and this title is found above his door. The clerics are called 'Brothers' (Fratres) and change their surname for a religious name. They say that this is how it is done in England, but in reality, it seems, this is not done in the Seminaries nor even do the other religious congregations.<sup>8</sup>

The Visitor then complained that this custom made it very inconvenient for the Visitation because,

The surnames of the members are hardly even known to the other confreres.<sup>9</sup>

Another peculiarity that he noted was the fact that the coadjutor confrères wore clerical dress,

...or at least the English ones do, the others being accustomed to another mode of dress refused to put it on.<sup>10</sup>

The position of the coadjutors was more peculiar still, in that they did not

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.: "Il capitolo ispettoriale non ha regolare adunanze. La commissione si raduna quando fa d'uopo. Ma non vi è libertà di discussione. L'ispettore è assoluto nel suo parere e non ammette contraddizione."

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 1b: "Vi è nell'ispettoria la tendenza di abbandonare i costumi ed i nomi in uso nella nostra Società per conformarsi alle usanze degli Ordini religiosi."

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.: "I chierici si chiamano Brothers (Fratres) e si cambia il loro cognome per un nome di religione. Dicono che si suol far così in Inghilterra, ma in realtà pare che non si fa nei seminari e neppure tra altre congregazioni — I Gesuiti fra i quali vi è di regola di chiamare i chierici — Brother, si lasciano loro il proprio cognome. Questa usanza rese molto più difficile l'adempimento del compito del Visitatore."

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.: "I propri cognomi dei soci non sono neppure conosciuti dagli altri confratelli."

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.: "I soci laici hanno la veste clericale, almeno gli inglesi, gli altri avvezzi ad altro costume rifiutarono di prenderla."

make their novitiate in the regular Novitiate house but in any particular house the Provincial chose.

Further, Fr Macey neglected to hear their *rendiconti* sending them to Fr Rabagliati while he would listen to those of the clerics. Even at their deaths they were treated differently: while the priests and clerics were buried in the Salesian cemetery at Burwash, the coadjutors were consigned to the common cemetery.

Last year when the triennially professed coadjutor, Michael Hughes died he was buried in the common cemetery in London.<sup>11</sup>

All in all, the coadjutors had the impression,

...not without reason, that they are despised.<sup>12</sup>

These differences in style would seem to have been introduced by Fr Macey as a way of adapting to the English situation. As Fr Virion was quick to point out, Fr Macey's notion of the prevailing English customs was rather idiosyncratic. Perhaps his earliest experience as a Catholic, in the monastic Community at Downside, had suggested these customs to him.

Fr Macey as a young convert probably entered Downside while it was in the full fervour of a somewhat 'gothic revival' style of monasticism. Religious habits and titles, almost unknown in England since the Reformation, had been adopted among the English Benedictines partly under the influence of the arrival of new Benedictine communities from the continent such as at Ramsgate for instance. (Their Abbey church was consecrated with full pontificals in 1884.)

This medieval style of religious life was in clear contrast to Don Bosco's own tradition which in the prevailing anti-clerical atmosphere of Piedmont had avoided any particular form of religious habit. He had likewise adopted the titles for the various officials in the Society from those currently used by the immensely popular Italian Railway companies, in order to make his work more acceptable.

What distressed Fr Virion more than the peculiarities of dress or title was the evident divisions within the community itself. He noted that sadly there was a degree of real division or separation between the priests and clerics:

...They are hardly ever found together, they speak very little to one another apart from necessity. More accentuated still is the separation between the clerics or priests and the lay brothers. In summary there is

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 2b: "Quando, l'anno scorso morì il coadjutore professore triennale Hughes Michele fù sepolto a Londra nel cimitero comune."

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 2: "Sembra loro che sono disprezzati e non senza ragione."

little family spirit. As well as that there is antipathy between the English and the Irish.<sup>13</sup>

Don Virion's clear impression was that the peculiarities of Fr Macey's regime had led to a situation of quite serious divisions between the different groups or classes of confrères, and a consequent loss of the traditional 'family spirit' of the Oratory.

His other main criticism was that Fr Macey

lacks the necessary care to exclude from the Society some whose morality was not secure; there is a little weakness of heart on the part of the Provincial.<sup>14</sup>

This weakness seemed to manifest itself in a degree of favouritism which Fr Macey showed to some of the confrères.

Fr Brownrigg asserts that once he asked Fr Macey for permission to attend a show at the Hippodrome. Fr Macey said, "No", saying it was not appropriate for a priest. Nonetheless Fr Brownrigg went and saw the Provincial at the show with Fr Kelly.<sup>15</sup>

The problems associated with Fr Macey's continued personal predominance are clearly highlighted in this report. Yet in his overall judgement on the work of the Province, Fr Virion was far from being totally negative, rather he showed a good deal of appreciation for the good work done and yet, with balance and realism, pointed to the serious problems which the English Province had to face.

They have worked and are working a great deal, rendering precious services to the Holy Catholic Church. On the part of numerous confrères there is optimum good will and a lively desire to do good. On the other hand, the Provincial is too personal, [idiosyncratic in his style] he stifles initiative and therefore does not form personnel trained to be in charge. The priests have excessive freedom: the members are helped very little. Salesian customs, the traditional way in which we do things and the particular spirit of the Congregation are not sufficiently well

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.: "Vi ha spiccata separazione fra sacerdoti e chierici non si trovano guari insieme non si parlano che poco fuor di necessità. Più accentuata ancora la separazione vi è fra chierici o sacerdoti e laici... In somma poco spirito di famiglia, in oltre vi è antipatia tra inglesi ed irlandesi."

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 1: "Manca la dovuta cura di escludere della Società certi di cui la moralità non è sicura; sarà un po' debolezza di cuore da parte dell'Ispettore."

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 2b: "...Don Brownrigg assicurò questo: Una volta chiese a D. Macey il permesso di assistere ad una rappresentazione all'ippodromo. D. Macey glielo negò dicendo che non era conveniente per un sacerdote. Nondimeno D. Brownrigg andò e vide l'Ispettore assistere alla rappresentazione con D. Kelly."

known. He has not always the necessary energy to stop disorders and send away those who have not given real proof of having a vocation. Situations have been accepted which are dangerous for the young priests assigned to them.<sup>16</sup>

In general, then, although Fr Virion acknowledged the good work that had been done and the good will of many, he was still concerned that Fr Macey lacked a deep enough understanding and appreciation of the genuine riches of the Salesian Tradition to be able to successfully adapt them to the undoubtedly different English scene. Above all he recognized that Fr Macey's continued leadership was preventing the development of new leaders for the Province.

### *The house reports*

In the specific house reports, Fr Virion's architectural training made him very aware of the poor state of the buildings everywhere. The inadequacies of the buildings were coupled with considerable overcrowding. (At Battersea 40 adults and 200 boarders lived and worked cheek by jowl, in a community which to a large extent deliberately isolated itself from the neighbourhood and even from the Parish.) All these factors combined to exert a great deal of physical, personal and psychological pressure on the staff and boys who were there. Hence Fr Virion saw it as part of his brief to comment on the state of the buildings.

At Battersea, he found the workshop accommodation to be defective, very old and degrading. The shoemaking, tailoring, and the carpentry sections were housed in miserable conditions,<sup>17</sup> a situation which illustrated Fr Macey's level of regard for the Salesian tradition of technical education.

At Burwash he noted not only the poor state of the Novitiate house itself, gerry-built by the Salesians, but also the lack of any conveniences except the most primitive dry privies, the contents of which required burying in the orchard every day.<sup>18</sup> At Farnborough, he also reported on the dangerous state of the old house which was lined entirely with wood

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.: "Per altro [...] L'Ispettore è troppo personale, assorbe le iniziative e così non si forma personale adatto per la direzione. I sacerdoti hanno soverchia libertà: i soci sono poco aiutati; le usanze salesiane, i modi tradizionali di fare e lo spirito particolare della Congregazione non sono abbastanza conosciuti. Non si ha sempre la dovuta energia per impedire disordini od allontanare quelli che non danno prova di vera vocazione. Si sono accettati posti pericolosi per i giovani sacerdoti che vi si mettono."

<sup>17</sup> ASC. S31 24(12) Inghilterra (Battersea) (Hereafter Bta.) Fr Virion's report on Battersea.

<sup>18</sup> ASC. S31 24(12) Inghilterra (St. Joseph's Retreat.) (Hereafter Bur.) Fr Virion's report on Burwash.

and the overcrowded state of the dormitories and small size of the individual rooms.<sup>19</sup>

### *The Superiors*

More significantly, Fr Virion's comments on the state of leadership in the Province show up very clearly the inadequacy and virtual stagnation which was evident among the Rectors of the Province. With regard to the Superiors, he noted that at Battersea, Fr Macey,

...the Rector is nearly always in his room writing letters and doesn't take enough account of what was going on in the house, he talks very little to the clerics and the boys. Most of the members were affectionate but even those of good spirit (like Fr Goy) feel that he has favourites and that all are not treated equally. Generally, he leaves much liberty to the confrères especially the priests who go out when they like. [...] The clerics are little helped and directed, and the coadjutors not at all [...] He imposes his will and allows no opposition. It seemed that the Director showed himself very little satisfied with the news of the extraordinary visitation...<sup>20</sup>

Following the earlier remarks about his style as Provincial, one can understand why Fr Virion showed a good deal of concern about the style leadership in the English Province. Fr Macey seemed not only to have lost interest in the pastoral care of the house itself but also to be unwilling to confide its care to his subordinates.

At Farnborough, the opposite phenomenon could be seen of a Rector, who in clear contrast with Fr Macey's style, was over involved in the running of the school. Having been the headmaster during the previous Superior's period of office, it is easy to understand Fr Muldoon's position.

The Director is zealous working for the good of the house but he takes everything on to himself, over burdening himself with the discipline of the pupils and not leaving any initiative to his subordinates. He did not have the *rendiconti* or give the monthly conference. The clerics have very

<sup>19</sup> ASC. S31 24(12) Inghilterra (Istituto S. Anselmo, Farnborough). (Hereafter F.)

<sup>20</sup> ASC. S31 24(12) Inghilterra Bta. pp. 16b, 17: "Il Direttore (D. Macey) sta quasi sempre in camera occupato nel scrivere lettere, non si rende conto sufficiente dell'andamento della casa, parla poco ai chierici e ai ragazzi. Dei soci la maggior parte gli è affezionata ma si è sentito, anche da confratelli di buono spirito (come D. Goy) che vi ha parzialità, tutti non sono trattati ugualmente. Lascia generalmente molto libertà ai soci e specialmente ai sacerdoti ch'escono come loro piace. I chierici sono poco aiutati ed indirizzati. I coadjutori quasi totalmente trascurati [...] impone il suo parere non ammette opposizione [...] Pare che il Direttore si sia dimostrato poco soddisfatto dell'annuncio della visita straordinaria..."

little help with their studies or even with their religious formation.<sup>21</sup>

At Burwash, Fr Virion found the strangest situation of all:

The Rector, Fr de Bary, lives at Battersea and only comes down from time to time. He does hear the *rendiconti* but Fr Simonetti who has the responsibility as director for the day to day running of the house does not actually have the authority.<sup>22</sup>

The Provincial does visit the house: but does not leave any record. He seems not to have the interest he should have in the good running of the house, the teachers are not appropriate and the staff do not give the edifying example more than ever necessary in houses of formation.<sup>23</sup>

At East Hill, Fr Hawarden, the Rector:

is always out of the house. He has little care for his subjects and gives them very little help in the practice of their religious life. He is active and intelligent but absorbed in all his own diverse jobs.<sup>24</sup>

As a result, Fr Virion noted,

The House Chapter does not work, the religious life is totally irregular in the house.

As a whole, then, the quality of leadership in the Province was far from reassuring. The Superiors as a group did not seem to show any high level of awareness of their function as the inspirers and spiritual guides of their communities, and had very little apparent concern for the younger members still in training. This was in clear contrast with the ideal of the director in Don Bosco's mind who was to be much more the spiritual father and indeed confessor of both Salesians and boys than a chief executive.

<sup>21</sup> ASC. S31 24(12) Inghilterra F., p. 10: "Il Direttore è zelante, si dà impegno pel buon andamento della Casa ma accentra tutto in sè, desimpegna da sè tutte le cariche come la disciplina degli allievi e non lascia iniziativa di sorte ai dipendenti [...]. I rendiconti non si fanno regolarmente. Vi ha una conferenza al mese. Pare che i chierici sono poco aiutati sia per lo studio sia per la formazione religiosa..."

<sup>22</sup> ASC. S31 24(12) Inghilterra Bur., p. 4: "La casa è irregolarmente amministrata cioè il direttore D. De Bary risiede a Battersea, non viene che di tanto in tanto. Ma riceve i rendiconti dei Soci e D. Simonetti che ha la responsabilità di Direttore nell'andamento giornaliero (sic) della casa non ne ha l'autorità."

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.: "L'Ispezzore fa la visita della Casa; non lascia Memoriale. Sembra che non porti l'interesse che dovrebbe al buon andamento gli insegnanti non sono addatti e il personale non dà sempre l'edificazione che è più di altrove necessaria nelle case di formazione."

<sup>24</sup> ASC. S31 24(12) Inghilterra (Parrocchia S. Maria Maddalena, Wandsworth), p. 29b. (See B.W. KETH, *Historical notes on English Catholic Missions*, London, 1907): "D. Hawarden Luigi, Dirett. È sempre fuori di casa. Ha poca cura dei sudditi e li aiuta per poco nella pratica della vita religiosa. È attivo ed intelligente ma assorbe in se stesso tutte le diverse cariche. Non si fa il capitolo [...]. La vita religiosa è tutta irregolare in casa."



*Chastity and morality*

One of the most serious parts of Fr Virion's report dealt with the community life and moral state of the House at Battersea, where it would appear that all was not well. The prevailing lack of direction and inspiration, combined with the enclosed and overcrowded conditions of the place to produce a suffocating atmosphere, far from conducive to mental or moral health.

Young priests and clerics stay behind in the sacristy with youngsters quite freely. In all this though, it would appear that there has been a notable improvement. The presence of Fr Campana was scandalous for many times he encouraged the weaknesses (of others) by his own wicked example. Moreover, one can say that there is no supervision. They say that 'assisting' [the traditional Salesian word for looking after youngsters in unstructured situations] as it is conceived in general, in Salesian houses is repugnant to the English character, which prefers to be left to its own initiative and conscience. It is true, in part, and agrees with the education which is given in the families and in other Colleges in this country. But the other thing they dislike is the hard work and self-denial which is needed to give an acceptable 'assistance' which is not indiscreet nor humiliating for the boys and which nonetheless assures morality among them. Particular friendships are flourishing.<sup>25</sup>

Fr Virion showed a good deal of openness of mind by being able to admit that the Salesian style of working might need to be modified to fit into an English situation. Yet he was not frightened to recommend that there was a real need for supervision which is neither 'indiscreet or humiliating'. Such comments showed how conscious he was of the need to interpret the Salesian tradition in a creative way.

*Don Bosco and assistance*

Don Bosco's practice of 'assistance' had developed from his practical experience of working for the young apprentices of Turin with neither premises nor the help of other interested adults. He found he could best

<sup>25</sup> ASC. S31 24(12) Inghilterra Bta., p. 19. Castità e Moralità: "Giovani sacerdoti e chierici si trattenevano in sagrestia con giovanotte liberamente. In tutto questo sembra che vi sia notevole miglioramento. La presenza di D. Campana era di scandalo per molti, incoraggiava le debolezze pel suo cattivo esempio [...]. Piuttosto si può dire che non vi è sorveglianza. Dicono che l'assistenza come è concepita in generale nelle case Salesiane ripugna al carattere inglese a cui piace essere lasciato alla propria iniziativa e coscienza. È vero in parte e consentaneo all'educazione che si dà in famiglia e nei altri collegi del paese. Ma ripugnerà anche la fatica e l'abnegazione che si vuole per fare un'accurata assistenza che non sia indiscreta nè umiliante pei giovani e che nondimeno assicuri la moralità fra di loro. Fioriscono amicizie particolari."



direct the energies of his boys by taking a direct part in or even leading their games and activities and thereby developing their friendship. This approach allowed him to have a much more pervasive influence than any mechanical surveillance could ever have provided.

The traditional story of his taking the boys from the 'Generala' (Turin's Borstal) for a day in the country without their warders provides at least a parable of the style of supervision he desired. (This episode probably took place about the year 1855-6 and there is an account of it in the *Memorie Biografiche* Vol. 5, p. 217-227.)

In fact, the tradition came to be interpreted somewhat mechanically so that 'assistance' was taken to mean total surveillance, 100% of the time, to put the boys in the 'moral impossibility of committing a sin'. Such an exaggeration made the idea both indiscreet and humiliating.

As far as Fr Virion could judge, this somewhat inadequate, English style of supervision was not helped by the lack of discretion about excluding from the school notable offenders.

There has not been the necessary care to exclude from the boys some whose morality, unfortunately, leaves much to be desired. There are some who rejoice in very evil reputations and there is one who contracted a shameful disease and who was not sent away. (I am assured that this was common knowledge to many in the house.)<sup>26</sup>

The whole question of the moral tone of Salesian boarding schools was one that was of great concern to Don Bosco, working as he did, with young people who had often lived on their wits on the streets. He firmly believed that it was necessary for the staff of the schools to show a real degree of warmth in their relationships with the youngsters but one that at the same time, safeguarded the youngster's psychological and emotional freedom and vulnerability, one that was free, therefore, from any sexual overtones. He saw the affective maturity of the Salesians as the '*sine qua non*' for working as closely as this with these youngsters. Where a warm friendly atmosphere flourished, supported by affectively mature adults, then he believed young people were free to grow to maturity in a wholesome atmosphere. Where it failed then, he was convinced that the pressures of exclusive friendships would prevent young people from growing to psychological balance and maturity.

In the first three articles of the Salesian Rule on chastity, we can see the educational reasons Don Bosco gave for giving such significance to personal and affective maturity on the part of his Salesians what he referred

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 20b: "Non si ha la dovuta cura per togliere di mezzo ai giovani certi che lasciano purtroppo da desiderare per la moralità. Vi sono che godono la più cattiva riputazione; anzi ve n'è uno che contrasse un morbo vergognoso e non fu mandato via (l'assicurò D. Ber come cosa conosciuta da molti in casa."

to as the virtue of purity of heart (traditionally known as the angelic virtue) or chastity.

1. Whoever deals with abandoned youngsters must certainly endeavour to enrich himself with every virtue. But the virtue which ought to be even more seriously developed, always having it before his eyes, that angelic virtue, that virtue dearest of all to the Son of God, is the virtue of chastity.
2. Whoever has not the well founded hope of being able to maintain this virtue with divine help, in word in deed and in thought, should not apply to this Congregation, because at every step he will be exposed to great dangers.
3. The unguarded word, even if indifferent, are very often evilly interpreted by youngsters, who has already been the victims of human passion. Therefore maximum caution must be used when dealing with youngsters of whatever age or condition.<sup>27</sup>

In his report on the individual confrères at Battersea, Fr Virion made specific references to some who were not secure in their morality:

M.A.: Catechist for the artisans, intelligent not very zealous for the good of the artisans. Not secure with regard to morality; frequently has boys in his room... G.L.: enjoys a bad reputation for morality and sincerity.<sup>28</sup>

These comments must have made the Superior Chapter in Turin even more concerned about the direction in which the English Province was moving. The fact that Fr Macey did not seem able to exert himself to avoid such dangers left him open to the charge of being naive or foolhardy.

### *Community life*

With regard to community life Fr Virion found further evidence of distinctions and unequal treatment at table:

While the priests have their food served on dishes from which they help themselves, the rest have it already portioned out.<sup>29</sup>

He further noted that there was unequal treatment with regard to providing for the needs of the different groups of confrères.

<sup>27</sup> P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella Storia della Religiosità Cattolica*, Roma, 1981, Vol. 2, pp. 408, 409. Cf. AS. 022(11), p. 12, the earliest draft of the Rule.

<sup>28</sup> ASC. S31 24(12) Inghilterra Bta., p. 17b: "M.A. catechista degli artigiani. Intelligente poco zelante pel bene degli artigiani Non sicuro di moralità. Ha spesso giovani in camera."

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21: "Vita Comune: I soci hanno a mensa ugual trattamento colla differenza che per i sacerdoti si dà il piatto di servizio, per gli altri la porzione."

The priests receive everything they request it is made difficult for the clerics and the coadjutors find it hard to get the least little thing.<sup>30</sup>

### *Military chaplains*

A further area of concern was for the vocations of the young priests who served as military chaplains at Aldershot:

The Army Chaplains occupy a dangerous position: they have their own accommodation in the Camp where they sleep, or at least one has to. They are very free, they smoke, (strictly forbidden by the Salesian Regulations) they have money and accept invitations. The work for each one depends on their own good will because except for Sunday services and visits to the hospital and the prison the rest is not obligatory nor is it controlled.<sup>31</sup>

In the personal reports he wrote:

Fr J.Q.: He seems to work with zeal in the Camp (but to whom is he accountable?). His vocation is in danger as is his morality. He runs a society for girls. He was seen for instance, at dinner with women in London where he went without reference to the Superior.<sup>32</sup>

While most of these complaints seem harmless enough, they represent the challenge which religious communities have to face again and again about how far apostolates outside the general scope of the community work can be taken on without destroying the religious life of those involved. Fr Virion sounds almost contemporary with his insistence on accountability as the key to the freer and wider style of work.

### *The students*

The other area of concern that showed up in the house reports was the programme of training and studies for the students.

The clerics, as a rule, do only one year of Philosophy at Burwash and not everyone does it. By far the greater number of them study philosophy in the individual houses. Having completed their philosophy

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 18b.

<sup>31</sup> ASC, S31 24(12) Inghilterra F., p. 10b, 11: "I Cappellani militari hanno una posizione pericolosa, hanno la loro abitazione nel campo e vi dormono, si ha di questo l'obbligo almeno per uno. Sono molto liberi, fumano, hanno denaro accettano inviti. Il lavoro che fa ciascuno dipende della propria buona volontà, perché eccettuato i servizi religiosi della domenica e le visite all'ospedale e alla prigione il resto non è obbligatorio e non vi è controllo."

<sup>32</sup> "Don Q. [...] Pare che lavori con zelo nel campo (chi se ne può rendere conto?). È in pericolo per la vocazione e la moralità. Si trova in società con ragazze. Fu per caso visto in un banchetto con donne a Londra dove si era recato senz'avvertirne i superiori."

they start their theology in the individual houses. They do not have here the practical Training (= Tirocinio) as is laid down.<sup>33</sup>

The problem that the Salesian students faced was that they were expected to study for the ministry while at the same time taking a full part in the work of their particular school. In the absence of Salesians qualified to teach the students philosophy or theology, they tended to be left with the latin manuals, teaching themselves as best they could. It was little wonder that Bishop Amigo, Bourne's successor in Southwark, began to insist on administering diocesan theological examinations before he was willing to ordain Salesians to the priesthood, something that he strictly had no legal right to do since the Salesians had the right of presenting their own letters dimissorial by Pontifical right.<sup>34</sup>

### *Conclusions*

What can be noted in general, then, from this report is that the Province seems to have reached something of a crisis of direction and growth. The period of the founding of the Province having come to an end Fr Macey seemed to have lost the capacity to inspire and to have retired to his office, unable to lead in a new style and unable to step down and open the way for another to take his place. The other Rectors would seem to have no very clear vision of what their particular mission was. They seem to have become absorbed by the powerful undercurrents of English notions of class and ecclesiastical customs, largely inimical to the original inspiration of Don Bosco.

This crisis of direction showed up in serious problems in the moral atmosphere of the boarding schools which indicated a lack of proper pastoral care both for the pupils and the educators themselves.

The serious problems that inadequate professional and theological education of the younger Salesians were also highlighted, namely, a poor corporate self image and consequent low levels of commitment.

### **The Extraordinary Visitations Worldwide**

The Extraordinary Visitations of 1908 had taken place simultaneously all over the Society. The Superior Chapter had decided to announce the

<sup>33</sup> ASC. S31 24(12) Bur., p. 4b: "I chierici fanno di regola soltanto un'anno di filosofia a Burwash e non tutti lo fanno. Il più gran numero di loro studia la filosofia nelle case particolari. Compiuto il corso di filosofia incominciano la teologia, anche nelle case particolari. Non vi ha il tirocinio pratico come è stabilito."

<sup>34</sup> SDB. GB., J. NOONAN, *Don Bosco's England*, Part VI, pp. 9-13... Noonan referred to his own experience of being examined by Bishop Amigo before he would admit him to orders.

Visitations at their session on the 13th-15th January, 1908, to commence in the following March.<sup>35</sup> Fr Paul Virion was sworn in as a Visitor for the Provinces of Austria, Belgium and England on the 31st January 1908.<sup>36</sup> Towards the end of the year, the Superiors appointed a Commission to read and analyse the various reports. Their general findings from the Visitations were entered in the Minutes of the Superior Chapter as follows:

1. There is a real shortage of personnel and especially of capable personnel.

2. A lack of good Rectors. The Rectors have in fact, become administrators, having ceased to be confessors — even with conferences, with the *rendicontos* and the other means suggested by Don Bosco for caring for Vocations and for the formation of the confrères to solid piety and exact religious observance.

3. There is a lack of good confessors — most absolve but do not direct and hence many have recourse to people outside, with the loss of the spirit of our own Congregation.

4. There are deficiencies in the formation of personnel — and it is specially neglected for the coadjutors who are exposed to real dangers. Too many unworthy subjects are retained in our houses who ruin others and the system of changing their house does little more than add to the evil. It would be better to remove those Provincials and Rectors who do not have the aptitude or do not do their duty.<sup>37</sup>

The problems the Society faced in general, in 1908, could be illustrated in every particular from the evidence in Fr Virion's report on the English Houses.

As a result of the report and of the length of his time in office, the Superior Chapter decided to replace Fr Macey as Provincial by Fr Aeneas Tozzi, the Rector in Cape Town.

<sup>35</sup> ASC. D870. *Verbali delle Riunioni Capitolari*, vol. II, § 1361. Visita Straordinaria.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, § 1389.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, § 2293: "1. Deficienza di personale e di personale soprattutto capace; 2. deficienza di buoni direttori. I Direttori, cessati di essere confessori — anziché colle conferenze, col rendiconto, colle altre industrie suggerite da D. Bosco curare le vocazioni, formare a soda pietà e ad esatta osservanza religiosa il personale — divennero amministratori; 3. mancanza di buoni confessori — i più assolvono non dirigono e quindi molti ricorrono ad estranei con scapito dello spirito proprio della Congregazione; 4. deficienza nella formazione del personale — i coadiutori specialm. sono troppo trascurati ed esposti a pericoli; 5. troppi soggetti immeritevoli si ritengono nelle nostre Case che guastano gli altri e il sistema di cambiarli di casa non fa il più delle volte che aumentare il male. Converrebbe togliere quegli Ispettori e Direttori che non hanno attitudine o non fanno il loro dovere."

TABLE I

*Salesians in the English Province 1887-1930*

year	B	CT	Br	F	C	St. G.	St. MM.	TOTAL				
1887	3							3	B = Battersea			
1888	4							4	CT = Cape Town			
1889	4							4	Br = Burwash			
1890	6							6	C = Chertsey			
1891	6							6	St. G. = South			
1892	6							6	St. MM = Wandsworth			
1893	11							11	F = Farnborough			
1894	20							20				
1895	18							18				
1896	26							26				
1897	29	5						34				
1898	26	5	9					40				
1899	32	7	9					48				
1900	28	9	21					54				
1901	33	9	21					63				
1902	37	9	23	4				73				
1903	36	9	15	5	1			66				
1904	40	10	19	7	1	5	5	87				
1905	43	13	10	7	1	5	6	84				
1906	48	14	17	6	1	-	+	83				
1907	51	12	17	6	1			90				
1908	50	7	10	8	1			76				
1909	51	7	17	9	1			75				
1910	45	12	18	11	1			87				
1911	46	12	14	7	2			79				
1912	45	14	12	10	2			83				
1913	43	13	14	11	1			82				
1914	41	14	19	13	2			89				
1915												
1916						P	Cl	W	L	Bt		
1917	42	15	10	14	2						83	P = Pallaskenry
1918	44	16	10	14	2						86	Cl = Cowley
1919	43	16	9	14	2						84	W = Warrenstown
1920	33	14	18	14	6	5					80	L = Lansdowne
1921	33	14	2	12	7	5					73	Bt = Bolton
1922	36	13	3	12	9	8	51				130	
1923	36	11	4	13	12	10	56	1			143	
1924	35	12	5	16	13	12	63	3			145	
1925	28	13	6	16	13	12	62	6	3		167	
1926	30	13	6	16	14	15	69	8	8	7	186	
1927	33	8	7	16	14	15	62	6	8	9	178	
1928	33	6	8	27	15	10	59	6	5	11	180	
1929	33	14	9	16	13	10	51	8	14	12	180	
1930	33	7	8	13	13	8	54	10	7	12	174 * 9	S = Shrigley

TABLE 2

*Place of birth of Salesians making first profession*

	1878-1918	1919-1931	TOTAL
LONDON	16	13	29
LIVERPOOL	4	8	12
LANCASHIRE	6	15	21
DUBLIN	3	2	5
CORK	3	2	5
KERRY	1	1	2
TIPPERARY	4	1	5
WATERFORD	0	2	2
LIMERICK	0	5	5
MAYO	2	2	2
MEATH	0	2	2
ROSCOMMON	1	0	1
LEITRIM	0	1	1
SLIGO	1	0	1
BELFAST	0	1	1
CAVAN	1	0	1
TYRONE	3	2	5
ARMAGH	1	2	3
ANTRIM	1	1	2
FERMANAGH	0	1	1
IRELAND	22	25	47
SCOTLAND	0	6	6
ITALY	13	2	15
MALTA	5	1	6
BELGIUM	2	0	2
FRANCE	2	0	2
GERMANY	1	0	1
BRAZIL	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>198</b>

During the first period between 1878 and 1918, London and the North West of England (Liverpool and Lancashire) account for a quarter of all first Professions. Ireland makes up another quarter, with Italy and Malta accounting for another 20 percent. Another quarter come in the main from other parts of England where Catholics lived in some numbers, Yorkshire and the North East.

During the second period, the most notable change is that a quarter of all first professions come from the North West, while London retains its previous percentage. Ireland continued to make the same contribution to professions though the opening of the house at Limerick would seem to have made some difference to the distribution. The advent of Scotland as a source of vocations and the almost total absence of foreign personnel making first profession suggests a real process of local growth has taken place.



TABLE 3

*First professions made by salesians working in the english Province*


---

1877-1889	10
1890-1899	23
1900-1909	33
1910-1919	20
1920-1929	86

---

These figures illustrate both the slow up of growth in professions in the decade 1910-1919 and the dramatic level of post war growth which requires some explanation.

During the final sittings, the Chapter was busy with the formation of personnel and above all with confirming the election of the new Provincials and Rectors and has decided... 6. Fr Aeneas Tozzi is elected as Provincial for the English.<sup>38</sup>

A note above this entry contains the single word '*sospeso*'.

During the Chapter meeting on October 26th, that year, a further tantalizing note confirmed this.

For the moment, the communication of the nomination of Fr Charles Macey as Rector of the Cape of Good Hope and the nomination of Fr Aeneas Tozzi to the English Province is suspended.<sup>39</sup>

What caused the Superiors to change their minds is not recorded, but perhaps the not altogether flattering Visitation Report from Cape Town, sent in by Fr Pietro Cogliolo as well as the fact that Fr Tozzi had drawn up the plans for the building of a new Salesian Institute in Somerset Road, made the superiors hesitate to move him.<sup>40</sup>

In the meantime Fr Macey, himself was called to Turin to discuss the move.<sup>41</sup>

The upshot of all this was that a letter from Cardinal Bourne, no doubt prompted by Fr Macey, was received by Don Rua, appealing on Macey's behalf. On the 28th of July 1909 Don Rua announced to the Chapter:

The Archbishop of London, Mgr. Bourne, begs Don Rua not to remove Fr Macey as Provincial, as do the greater part of the confrères. Don Tozzi, for his part, does not feel ready to assume the office of Provincial.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., § 1582: "In queste ultime sedute il Capitolo s'è occupato della formazione del personale e soprattutto della conferma od elezione dei nuovi Ispettori e Direttori ed ecco quanto ha determinato [...] 6. il Sac. Tozzi Enea eletto Ispettore (sospeso) per l'Inglese."

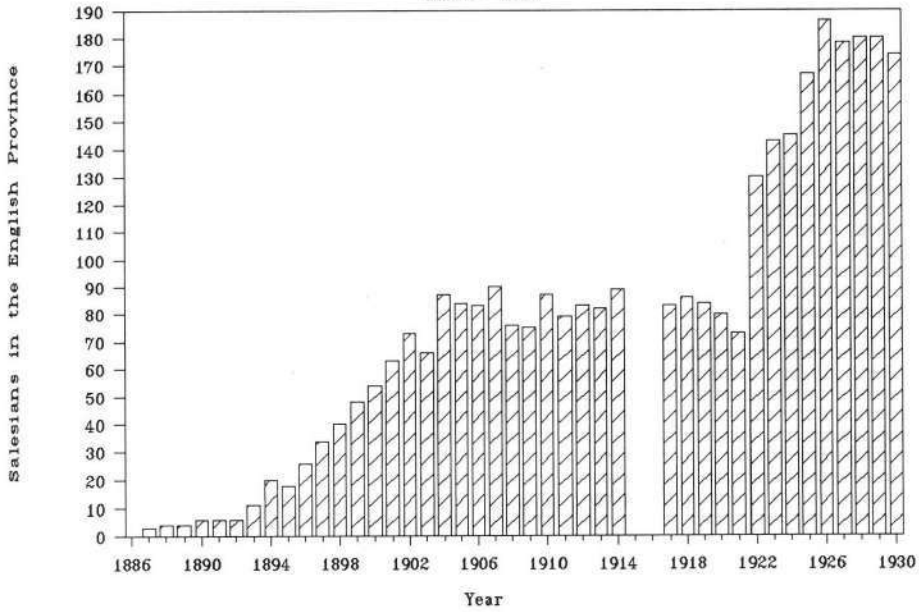
<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 1655: 26 Ott. 1908. Si sospende pel momento la comunicazione della nomina a Direttore di Capo di Buona Speranza di D. Macey Carlo e la nomina ad Ispettore di D. Tozzi Enea per l'Ispettorato Inglese."

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., § 1924.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., § 1925.

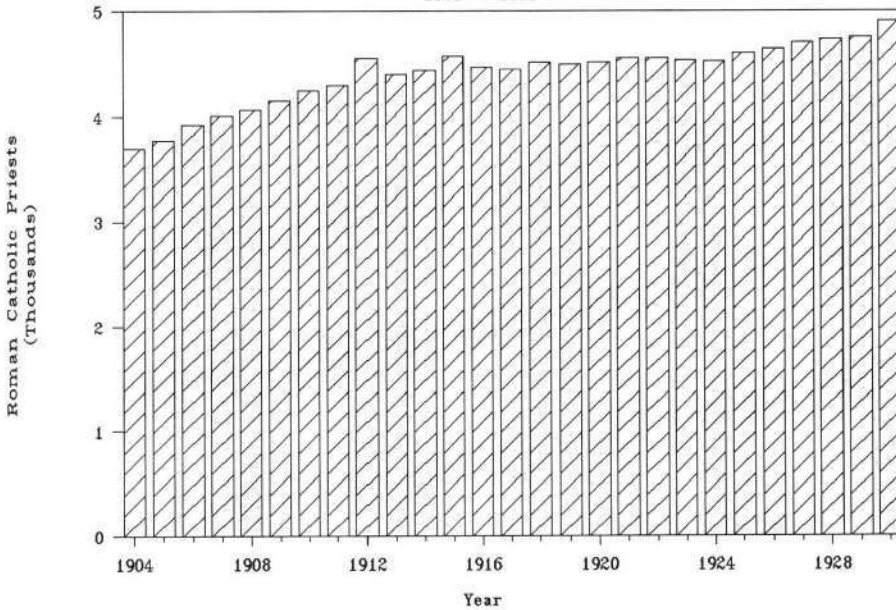
### Salesians in the English Province

1886 - 1930



### Roman Catholic Priests in the U.K.

1904 - 1930



Hence we suspend any decision, looking at it again when we deal with personnel.<sup>42</sup>

In the following September it was decided to heed Fr Virion's advice that the Province was too small and to appoint Fr Francis Scaloni as the Provincial of both the English and Belgian Provinces.<sup>43</sup>

No doubt, the Superiors thus hoped to avoid a major personality clash to which the whole English Province had been alerted through the letter of the confrères and of which Fr Tozzi must have been aware.

### A question of numbers

One of the most telling parts of Fr Virion's visitation report is where he examined the rate of development of the Salesians in England.

From the beginning till now, there have been 57 sent to the novitiate.

Forty-one made their profession.

Thirteen left (the novitiate) because they had no vocation.

Three left because of poor health.

Five left during or after triennial profession.

Six, of whom four were priests, left from perpetual vows.

(The priests were Fr Blackborrow, Fr Gannon, Fr MacAleer, Fr Campana. It does not appear that all of them made their novitiate in England).<sup>44</sup>

This simple numerical analysis, hardly commented on by Fr Virion expressed what must have been a major cause for concern to the Visitor. The facts would seem to indicate serious signs of crisis, stagnation and loss of morale. Overall, a quarter of those who were professed subsequently left the Society. Of the thirty-five who made perpetual vows, six later left the society, including four priests, in an age when to leave involved incurring severe canonical penalties.

If the figures are examined, (See Graph 1) an obvious pattern emerges. In the first few years, down to 1893, there was a very gradual growth in the

<sup>42</sup> § 1986: "L'Arcivescovo di Londra Mons. Bourne prega il Sig. D. Rua di non togliere D. Macey da Ispettore — così anche la maggior parte dei confratelli. D. Tozzi d'altra parte non si sente pronto ad assumere l'ufficio d'Ispettore — si sospende quindi ogni decisione rimandandola a quando si tratterà del personale."

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., § 2050 (31.8.1908).

<sup>44</sup> ASC. S31 24(12) Bta., p. 2: "Dal principio finora vi furono 57 mandati al noviziato. 41 fecero la professione; 13 uscirono del noviziato per mancanza di vocazione; 3 per mancanza di salute; 5 uscirono durante o dopo la professione trienn.; 6 fra quali 4 sacerdoti coi voti perpetui. I sacerdoti sono D. Blackborrow, D. Gannon, D. MacAleer, D. Campana. Non consta che abbiano tutti fatto il noviziato in Inghilterra."

number of Salesians, including novices, from four to eleven. This might be described as the period of initial germination.

Between 1893-1899, however, the numbers had risen to 48, an increase which was sustained till 1907, a period of rapid expansion. [One cause of the fluctuations of numbers between 1902 and 1909 was undoubtedly the influx of about twelve French confrères after the expulsion of the Religious under the anti-clerical Laws. Nine of them came to live in London: Frs Fevre, Sybille, Gicquel, Lucas and Brothers Hondermark, Malbequi, Civalero, and Weiss.]<sup>45</sup>

By 1907 the numbers had reached 90, at which point the numbers levelled off and began to decline. From then on till 1921, the numbers of Salesians and novices actually declined overall. We appear to enter a period of the doldrums. From 1921, there is a new spurt of growth which takes the numbers to 180 by 1926.

If the figures for the number of priests in England and Scotland are examined for the same period, (See Graph 2), then a similar pattern emerges of early steady growth, followed by a crisis round the first World War years, followed by a much less marked post war recovery. The fact that there is a delay in the figures for priests in general, is not surprising, given the fact that it took six years to become a priest while to become a Salesian only took a year as an aspirant, and a year as a novice, before being professed.

One factor which undoubtedly affected the figures was the first World War. During it, conscription undoubtedly decimated the group of young men who might have otherwise gone directly to the seminary.

What is apparent from the Salesian figures is that the crisis had begun well before the war. To establish the cause of such fluctuations is always difficult but as has been suggested above, an internal crisis of growth would seem to be part of the explanation. What the figures for priests in general would suggest is that more general factors also affected the whole recruitment of priests in these years.

## **A new Provincial**

As a consequence of the Report submitted by Fr Virion and despite the letters of appeal from Cardinal Bourne and the English confrères to maintain Fr Macey in office, Fr Francis Scalonì was appointed as his successor.

Francis Scalonì was born in Monterubiaco, a district near Ascoli-Piceno in the Marches, on August 30th, 1861 and first met Don

<sup>45</sup> SDB. GB. *Chronicle of the English Province*. See April 1903.

Bosco at Rome in 1875 at the home of the Duke of Salvati, for whom his family worked. He entered the Oratory at Turin in March 1876, as an apprentice carpenter. He changed to a course of secondary studies and on their completion in 1881 he received the cassock at San Benigno Canavese in 1881, made his first vows in 1882, and having worked in France was ordained priest in Marseilles on December 16th, 1887. He was a contemporary of Fr Macey in France though their paths had not crossed for thirty years. Fr Scaloni was appointed Rector of the first Belgian house at Hechtel in 1891 and in 1902, Provincial of Belgium. He served there till 1909 when he also took on the English Province and continued as Provincial of both till 1919. In his mortuary letter, written exceptionally by the Rector Major, Don Rinaldi, his finesse and almost aristocratic charm and reserve were remarked on, qualities he was immediately called upon to exercise as he took up his appointment in England.

Becoming Provincial of England for someone who spoke no English was not an easy task for on his own admission:

Up till now I've understood nothing and I don't know how to say anything at all.<sup>46</sup>

Very few of the English Salesians had studied in Italy, so that first of all there was a communications barrier which he had to overcome.

He wrote to Don Rua at the end of November 1909, after three weeks in England to report on his first impressions and to indicate the reasons which inclined him towards certain decisions.

### *His reception*

Fr Macey received me with fraternal charity but I noticed that the poor man was suffering very much indeed. I was immediately informed by Frs Rabagliati and Goy that the hearts of the others were upset and many were disposed to make trouble.<sup>47</sup>

For the rest, I will wait a while, I will appear not to have noticed the appearance of coldness from anyone and with the help of God, I will always be able to show myself calm and smiling: I drank bitterness and gave forth sweetness.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> ASC. 3654 A9 and following. Scaloni-Rua 27.11.1909: "Finora non capisco proprio nulla, non so dir nulla."

<sup>47</sup> ASC. 3653 E7, E8: "D. Macey mi ricevette con fraterna carità, ma mi accorsi presto che il poveretto soffriva moltissimo. Fui subito avvertito da D. Rabagliati e da D. Goy che gli animi di quasi tutti i confratelli erano sconvolti e che molti erano disposti anche a fare spropositi."

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.: "(3) Come del resto mi ci aspettavo un po', feci sembiante di non accorgermi dell'unanime ed apparente freddezza e, con l'aiuto di Dio, potei mostrarmi sempre calmo e sorridente: bevevo amaro e sputavo dolce."

Fr Scaloni's underlying ability to wait and to assess a situation accurately and then gradually work towards his desired solutions were his strongest assets in what was a very delicate situation. Fr Macey, after all, was effectively the founder and inspirer of the Salesian work in England. For a foreigner to come in to replace him was bound to be a critical moment as is the succession to any charismatic leader.

### *Anti-Italian feeling*

The problem that surfaced during the first days of Fr Scaloni's succession was one that was to dog the Salesians in England for many years to come, namely a feeling that the Superiors in Turin did not really trust them to run their own affairs and that, therefore, the Superiors needed to appoint reliable Italian superiors. Fr Scaloni presented the genesis of the problem in his letter to Don Rua:

Poor Fr Macey received with religious resignation the news of his replacement but when the day of my arrival drew near human weakness got the better of him and he opened his mind to some of his more intimate confrères who then communicated with the others... Why have a Provincial from outside the province after so many years of hard work? and our father and benefactor is he to be driven out like a villain because they want to 'italianize' England.<sup>49</sup>

This was perhaps, the sort of reaction which Don Rua had feared in 1888 when he appointed Fr Macey instead of Fr Bonavia as Rector on the death of Fr McKiernan.

Fr Macey's immediate reaction to the news of his replacement had been to take some practical steps to open a new house at Chertsey which he wanted to retire to with five of his supporters from Battersea. Since the only alternative Rector at Battersea was Fr Rabagliati, who was already somewhat unpopular because of his brusque manner, this was not an acceptable solution.

Reading between the lines Fr Scaloni realized that he must avoid allowing the establishment of a 'monarch in exile', with all the potential for disunity and rancour which might have been caused. Within three days of his arrival, Fr Scaloni had made what was probably to be the most significant decision of his first period of office as English Provincial.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.: "(4) Il povero D. Macey ricevette con religiosa rassegnazione l'avviso della sua sostituzione; ma quando si avvicinò il giorno del mio arrivo, la debolezza umana prese spesso il sopravvento e la manifestò con alcuni confratelli più intimi, i quali poi comunicarono ad altri le sue e le loro impressioni. 'Perché cercar l'ispettore fuori della provincia... dopo tanti anni di fatiche, il loro benefattore e padre era scacciato via come un ladro... si voleva italianizzare l'Inghilterra... ecc. ecc.'"

Considering all this in the first three days, I put it to Fr Macey and tried to persuade him that the Superiors still had every regard and affection for him, that they were very sorry about his determination to set up a new house and that he ought rather to assist my mission by remaining Rector of Battersea. If the Superiors, like myself, are convinced, then, how can anyone oppose it?<sup>50</sup>

This was an astute move by Fr Scaloni to make, almost immediately on his arrival, and it effectively headed off open rebellion, yet it did not prevent Fr Scaloni seeing the weaknesses of Fr Macey.

The poor man feels himself uplifted, he spoke of it with the others, it seems, and so in fact, things would appear to have changed in outlook. All the confrères who can express themselves in Italian or in French came to find me to show me their good will.<sup>51</sup>

Having thereby avoided the major disaster of an open split, Fr Scaloni requested Fr Macey's appointment as Rector of Battersea, recognising quite clearly his faults.

Fr Macey is rather easy going in outlook, of weak character and very impressionable: hence he is not severe enough for discipline. Either he closes his eyes or comes out with sudden bursts of corrections. On the other hand, his past experience must have influenced his upright soul and since he is pious and zealous and much loved by the greater part of the confrères. I am persuaded that particularly in the actual circumstances, it would be a grave error were he not to be nominated as Rector of Battersea. The material situation of the house and also that of the novitiate make his nomination almost a necessity.<sup>52</sup>

This gradualist and balanced approach to the problems of the Province mark Fr Scaloni as one of the wisest leaders in the Province's history. He put into practice in his government of the Province the Salesian educational

<sup>50</sup> ASC. 3653 E9: "Considerato tutto questo nei tre primi giorni, mi misi attorno a D. Macey per persuaderlo che i Superiori avevano in lui tutta la stima e l'affezione di una volta: che ero molto spiacente della sua determinazione di voler aprire una nuova casa e che egli avrebbe dovuto assecondare la mia missione col rimanere a Battersea in qualità di direttore se i Superiori, come ne ero convinto, non vi si sarebbero opposti."

<sup>51</sup> ASC. 3653 E10, E11: "Il povero uomo si sentì sollevato, ne parlò forse con gli altri e, d'allora in poi, le cose cambiarono di aspetto. Tutti i confratelli che potevano esprimersi in italiano od in francese vennero a trovarmi e mi manifestarono le loro buone disposizioni."

<sup>52</sup> ASC. 3653 E10, E11: "D. Macey è di vedute un po' larghe, di carattere debole e molto impressionabile; quindi egli è poco severo per la disciplina: chiude gli occhi o procede a scatti nelle correzioni. Però l'esperienza del passato, le modificazioni del suo stato presente debbono avere influito nel suo animo retto; e siccome è pio e zelante e molto amato dalla maggior parte dei confratelli, sono persuaso che specialmente nelle attuali circostanze, sarebbe un grave errore se non fosse nominato direttore di Battersea. La situazione materiale della casa poi e quella del noviziato rende la sua nomina quasi necessaria."



ideals which he wrote about in his book *Manuel des Jeunes Confrères qui débutent dans l'Apostolat Salésien* (Liège, 1907) which is one of the first attempts to apply some form of character analysis and current educational psychology to the traditional educational methodology developed by Don Bosco. His approach was always to attempt:

to better understand the youngster and to heal, as he has need, the sickness of his soul...<sup>53</sup>

He seemed to be able to adjust to circumstances and optimistically take the longer view. Writing about the situation where a youngster formally refuses to obey he wrote:

To exact immediate submission from the culprit would perhaps be a great imprudence; because you might run into a head-on collision, with someone ready to resist to the last...<sup>54</sup>

Rather than provoke a major confrontation, Fr Scaloni recognized the weakness of his own current position, since he was unable to speak English and also unable to reside full-time at Battersea because of his responsibilities in Belgium. He further recognised the devotion of most of the confrères to Fr Macey and knew that he could not really act without him.

However, this did not mean that he was indecisive. In the remainder of his letter to Don Rua he went on to replace all the other Rectors, while remarking:

The defects encountered in the other houses all have their cause in the Rectors who are not made for the positions they occupy.<sup>55</sup>

He therefore, made the following nominations: Fr Philip Williams to Burwash as Rector and Prefect, in the hope that he would more easily get on with Fr Simonetti, the Master of Novices; Fr Aloysius Sutherland as Rector of Farnborough, where his exuberant activity would be more in demand than at Burwash; and Fr Dominic Brownrigg as Rector and Parish Priest at St Mary Magdalen's in place of Fr Marsh who was sent to Chertsey to be Chaplain to the Sisters.

<sup>53</sup> F. Scaloni, *Manuel des Jeunes Confrères qui débutent dans l'apostolat Salésien* (Liège, 1907). Introduction p. 10: "Vous aider à bien connaître l'enfant et à guérir au besoin les maladies de son âme: tel est le but de ce manuel."

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>55</sup> ASC. 3654 A2, A3, A4, A5. Section 5. on the Provincial council, 6. on the Committee 8. on the Noviciate, 9. for a dispensation for novices of illegitimate birth; 11. for the repayment of the Sister's loan to Bishop Bourne.

*Fr Scaloni's administration*

Two of Fr Scaloni's main concerns were providing for proper financial administration and organising a canonically correct system of training for the students.

In pursuit of these goals he nominated as Provincial Councillors Frs Goy, Kelly (PP. at Battersea), Fr Macey and Fr Rabagliati and suggested Fr Simonetti instead of Fr Brown for the Commission which examined applications for entry and vows.

He recognised that Fr Macey operated rather cavalierly with the canonical regulations about the Novitiate and had withdrawn one candidate from Burwash after only 10 months instead of the canonical year and professed him at Battersea because of the needs of that house. He, therefore, enquired from the Superiors at Turin whether since there was no separation between the novices and students of Philosophy, this would invalidate their Profession?

He further asked for dispensations for two young men to be professed even though they were illegitimate.

This concern for proper canonical form showed Fr Scaloni to be a man of his time when the reform and codification of Canon Law was undertaken by Pope Pius X.

In terms of financial administration he asked the Superiors to help pay off the loan for the Sisters house at Chertsey which the Bishop had been forced to recall, being almost bankrupt himself.

He also asked for some technical advice on Fr Macey's financial practice of doubly mortgaging property or capital on which the Salesians were already committed to paying a life interest. In Belgium he maintained such a practice would have been frowned upon but he recognised that in England, even the Bishops frequently resorted to such unorthodox measures to finance their desperate need to expand church schools and buildings.

Finally he asked about the problem of two priests who wanted to leave the Society: Fr P.B. who wanted to go to the United States and Fr Q. who

...no rector will have in his house because of his danger to the general spirit. For this person it would be better to facilitate his leaving. It would be opportune to prolong as long as possible his permission to convalesce.

We have other confrères less good but I hope with kindness and firmness to make them better.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> ASC. 3654 A8: "Sarebbe forse opportuno di prolungargli il più possibile il suo congedo di convalescenza, perché nessun direttore lo vorrebbe in casa, come pericoloso per lo spirito generale. Abbiamo anche altri confratelli meno buoni, ma si spera con bontà e fermezza di renderli migliori."

In this routine administration Fr Scaloni showed himself to be thoughtful careful and compassionate. Even when dealing with those who were leaving the Society for serious faults, there is no rancour or talk of betrayal. His annual house reports are 'models of careful assessment and reporting in great contrast to the slipshod reports of Fr Macey.

### *Fr Goy's protest*

Perhaps the most intractable problem that Fr Scaloni had to face during his first period of office in England was raised by the confidential memorandum that Fr Edward Goy sent to the Superiors in Turin in 1910. It was marked *Confidential Information on the House at Battersea-London and on the Novitiate at Burwash; manuscripts of Fr Edward Goy about the years 1910-1913*.<sup>57</sup>

Given that Fr Scaloni replied to an enquiry about the document in March of 1910, it must be assumed that the document was sent to Turin at the end of 1909 or earlier in 1910. It is a complex document, partly a protest against the petty persecution which Fr Goy suffered from a group of clerics and priests at Battersea, and partly, at Fr Macey's complicity in this. More significantly though, it was a protest against the lack of decisive action by Fr Macey against the moral lapses of some of the Salesians which he saw as going unchecked. Fr Goy was needled into taking the step of protesting to Turin by the petty persecution which he had to suffer because of the fact that he had, at the Rector's suggestion, mentioned these lapses and the consequent atmosphere to the new Provincial.

Fr Edward Goy was born in Borgatello near Pavia in the north of Italy on Feb. 12th 1871. He had entered the Salesian Seminary at Valsalice, outside Turin in 1896, although he was already ordained a deacon for his own diocese. He was ordained a priest in Turin in the following year and sent to Battersea immediately afterwards. There he fulfilled the role of Catechist (ie. the person charged with the personal and spiritual welfare of the students and the care of the Church, as well as being the appointed monitor of the Rector) and later of Secretary to Fr Macey and the Provincial Council.<sup>58</sup> During Fr Virion's visitation, he remarked in his report that Fr Goy was a Provincial Councillor, Professor of Moral Theology and confessor to the Sisters at Battersea and Chertsey. Fr Virion found him to a religious of the best sort, teaching theology very well, but who is not used as much as he might be, and who is somewhat introverted.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> ASC 38 VII S31(42) 14 and 15: "Informazioni sulla casa di London-Battersea e del Noviziato di Burwash (manoscritto di D. Edoardo Goy circa gli anni dal 1910 al 1913)."

<sup>58</sup> SDB Archives. GB Biographical details from personal file of Fr Goy.

<sup>59</sup> ASC S31 24(12) Bta., p. 18: "Goy Edoardo, sac. Consigliere Professore di morale, Confessore delle Suore [...] Ottimo religioso, intelligente, fa bene la scuola di teologia. Non è utilizzato come si potrebbe; manca un po' di esteriorità."

Fr Goy's bill of complaints began with a narrative describing his difficulties in getting a trunk in order to move his belongings from Battersea to Burwash, due to the lack of cooperation of the bursar. Eventually, after he borrowed the cost of the trunk from Fr Simonetti, the novice Master, he had arrived unexpectedly at Burwash, much to the surprise of a group of clerics, on holiday from Battersea, who were unwise enough to make unflattering allusions to his arrival in a letter they sent to Fr Macey saying, how happy, they knew he would be that Fr Goy had taken up residence in foreign parts.<sup>60</sup> All this to show that he felt Fr Macey was to some extent party to the persecution he suffered.

He then came to the most serious part of his protest. He laid specific charges of immorality, with some evidence to back them, against Fr F., at the time the Bursar at Battersea and also against Fr H. He also specifically alleged that Fr C.W. has been spending his Sunday afternoons without permission at the house of his aunt with some young women, who were probably his cousins. He alleged that not only did the clerics neglect their study of theology and waste their time, reading magazines and newspapers of doubtful value, but they also used to slip out to the pub, dressed in mufti, and spend their evenings smoking and drinking.

While these offences were an odd mixture of the serious and the trivial and might seem to come from a somewhat exaggerated idea of discipline, yet for Fr Goy, the latter, minor breaches, undoubtedly formed part of a pattern of irregularity which led ultimately to immorality, which the Rector, Fr Macey, was not prepared to deal with.

The most serious charges Fr Goy made were that Fr Macey was prepared to ignore cases where there was plenty of evidence of at the least, unhealthy exclusive friendships between certain priests and some of the pupils, if not of something more serious. According to Fr Goy,

In 1900, Fr Macey called me and said to me: Look, I am giving you an order, and this is what is involved, every night, you must visit the dormitory between the hours of 11,30pm and 2,00am. I did this for about five years. Well, I found a boy in the cell of Fr F., then a cleric, (unordained student for the priesthood, already in vows) I referred the matter to Fr Macey but he did not believe me. The following year the boy went away but Fr F. had another. He became a priest and the bursar and a confidante of Fr Macey, hence I lacked money. He still has his 'little Benjamins' (favourites)... As for the Rector, I have talked to him myself but he doesn't want to listen.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> ASC. 38 VIII Burwash 14 e 15, p. 1: "Don Goy è arrivato sano e salvo. Deo Gratias! Quanto deve essere contento il vostro cuore dacché egli prese sua dimora in partibus."

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 6, 8: "Nel 1900 Don Macey mi chiamò e mi disse: guarda che ti do *un ordine* e che consiste che tu ogni notte devi visitare i dormitori dalle 11,30 alle 2. Feci questo per circa 5 anni. Orbene, trovai un ragazzo nella cella di D.F. allora chierico ed assistente: riferii la cosa a D. Macey, non mi credette. L'anno prossimo il giovane andò via; ma D.F. ne ebbe un altro.

Another flagrant case which Fr Macey did nothing about became so notorious that everyone even the painter, a Protestant, who comes to the house every day knew what was going on.<sup>62</sup>

Fr Goy's account of Fr C.W.'s misdemeanours has some of the elements of an Edwardian farce about it. One Sunday when Fr Goy went to say Mass at a Church where Fr C.W. had been had been going for some time previous. The Parish Priest (Vicar General of the diocese) had asked Fr Goy where this priest went for lunch. Fr Goy replied that he assumed that he had it with him. The priest replied that, in fact, he only ever took a cup of tea with him and then took a tram towards Croydon rather than in the Battersea direction. He had followed him, one day and found he went to his aunt's house where there were two young women.

Fr Goy finished his protest by writing:

I suggest nothing other than that the Rule be kept, that magazines should be absolutely abolished, that the clerics should do their theology from the beginning, because they do not have enough knowledge; that Fr F. should be removed immediately and that Fr Macey should know that he is not superior to the Rule and that he is not infallible and that the Prefect, Councillor for Studies and Catechist should be believed, that the Rector frequently visit all the house especially the rooms, on different days and in differing order and that he should believe those who are esteemed by the Superiors for regular observance of the Rule and kindness.<sup>63</sup>

### *Fr Scaloni's reply*

On reading Fr Goy's protest, it might be fair to comment that he was emotionally involved in the situation and therefore, to attribute part of his construction of the evidence to overwrought emotions and imagination: in other words, that the bursar's unkind treatment and the ragging of the clerics had unbalanced Fr Goy's judgement. When, however, Fr Scaloni replied to an enquiry that came from Turin, he confirmed the truth of Fr Goy's charges and in fact depicted the situation in an even darker light.

Divenne prete, economo, confidente di D. Macey. Perciò maneggia il denaro. Ha i beniamini [...]. E il direttore? Io stesso gliene parlai, non vuol sentire."

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 20: "Tutti a Battersea lo sanno, persino il pittore (un protestante che venne a lavorare in casa).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 17: "Io non suggerirei altro che la regola venga osservata, che i magazines assolutamente siano aboliti: che ai chierici si faccia di nuovo studiare la teologia, perche non hanno scienze sufficienti: che D.F. sia rimosso quanto questo prima che Don Macey sappia che non è superiore alla regola, e che non è infallibile così prefetto, consigliere scolastico, catechista saranno creduti e che il direttore visiti di frequente tutta la casa specialmente le camere in giorni diversi in ordini diversi che creda a coloro i quali per regolarità, osservanza delle regole e bontà sono stimati — dai superiori."

Knowing the events from various sources I can assure you that Fr Goy's letter is not at all exaggerated. As you can see, I don't yet sleep on a bed of roses, the more so, in fact, because Fr Goy does not tell everything... We have in fact, a good many priests like Fr M., Fr Q., Fr M., Fr McG, and Fr F. who for the good of the Congregation should be sent away. I have spoken about it a little in the Chapter (Provincial Council) and they say that before the end of the month, should the Superiors authorize me, I should promote the exit of these 'poor devils.' The Congregation would not lose anything and being in the Congregation is not doing any more good to their souls than could be done for them as secular priests. If I am authorized to act in this way, I will help them by persuasion and will try to induce them to get themselves accepted by a bishop without making them unfriendly.<sup>64</sup>

Fr Scaloni went on to say that these were not the worst of his problems:

The most embarrassing case is that of an English priest, who is very well thought of who for at least two years, committed vile acts with a youngster (probably also with others) *without whom. I cannot convince him of his guilt.* The youngster, who merits belief, has denounced him under the advice of his confessor but he doesn't want the priest to know that he has spoken and he would be more than capable of denying it, to make up the calumny if I do act against him. I do not know how to deal with it — up till now I have not been able to get from the youngster anything written or any agreement to act. Please ask Fr Albera what should be done. To change the confrère's house would only be to suspend sentence, and would encounter resistance from his Rector Fr Macey who is convinced that it is a calumny. As this priest is from a well off family and is constitutionally rather weak, frequently coughing up blood, I am inclined to send him home to recoup his health and to prolong his leave of absence for health reasons until the Lord sees fit to free us of him.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> ASC 3654 A10, A11. Scaloni - Gusmano 4.3.1910: "...conoscendo le cose da varie fonti posso assicurare che la lettera di D. Goy non è punto esagerata. Come vede, non dormo ancora sopra un letto di rose, tanto più che don Goy non dice tutto... Abbiamo colà parecchi sacerdoti, specie D.M., D.Q., D.M..., D. McG e Don F., i quali, per il bene della Congregazione, dovrebbero andarsene. Parli un po' in capitolo della cosa e mi dica, prima della fine del mese, se i Superiori mi autorizzano a favorire l'uscita di questi disgraziati. La Congregazione non perderà nulla ed essi, in Congregazione, non fanno più di bene alla loro anima che non potrebbero farne come sacerdoti secolari. Se sono autorizzato ad agire in questo senso, mi servirò della persuasione e tenterò la prova di indurli a farsi accettare da un Vescovo senza inimicarceli..."

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., A11, A12: "Il caso il più imbarazzante è quello di un sacerdote inglese, molto apprezzato, il quale commette cose indegne con un giovane, da due anni almeno (forse anche con altri) *senza ch'io possa convincerlo della sua colpevolezza.* Il giovane, il quale merita fede, lo ha denunciato dietro consiglio del confessore, ma non vuole che il sacerdote sappia che egli ha parlato, e sarebbe capacissimo di negare, di simulare la calunnia se io agissi contro il colpevole.



This last case makes clear the difficulties of dealing honestly and fairly with this type of accusation. The tissue of suspicions, fears, lies and the fear of scandal make it very difficult for truth or justice to be done or still less, to be seen to be done.

The fact that Fr Scaloni was ready to dismiss from the society five priests from a total of less than eighty Salesians in the Province and was embarrassed enough about another to put him on permanent leave of absence, showed the depth of the crisis which the Salesians were experiencing, particularly at the mother house in Battersea.

The malaise which they suffered from can best perhaps be explained by the fact that most of the early English Salesians had been brought up and educated largely free of charge by Fr Macey. It would appear that he was, however, chronically unable to let them grow up, and instead of sending them out to build new houses and spread the work for the young elsewhere, he insisted in keeping them round him at Battersea in the restricting circumstances of a boys' boarding school, with a ratio of Salesians to boys of about one to four, which was bound to be rather cramping. What seems to have resulted was an almost incestuous atmosphere where unhealthy relationships were almost bound to arise.

The low ebb in morale that such a situation indicated was matched by a period of doldrums in its numerical intake. However, the fact that a similar though slightly later phenomenon is noticeable in the figures for priests in Scotland and England suggests that there were other societal factors at work during this period.

The years before the First World War were marked by deepening political divisions in the United Kingdom. The House of Lord's last ditch defence of their privileges, the Trades Unions beginning to exercise their new found muscle on the railways, in the docks and in the mines. The Womens' Suffrage Movement took a very militant turn when Miss Davidson threw herself in front of the King's horse at The Derby in 1913. The Crisis of Irish Home Rule and Ulster's opposition prepared the way for the Rebellion of 1916 and the sad tale that followed. The consensus that had gone with the economic growth and world predominance of the Victorian period had been replaced by the conflicts, uncertainties and the slow down of economic growth that had become painfully obvious by the end of the first decade of the new century.

Non so come regolarli — Sin' ora non ho potuto avere dal giovane nessuno scritto, nessuna facoltà di agire... Domandi un po' al Sig. D. Albera come si regolerebbe. Cambiare il confratello di casa sarebbe spostare solamente il pericolo e troverei resistenza nel suo direttore. D. Macey, il quale sarebbe convinto che si tratta di calunnia... Come questo sacerdote è di buona famiglia ed è tisco abbastanza avanzato, con frequenti sbocchi di sangue, io inclinerei a mandarlo a casa sua per rimettersi in salute, e prolungherei il permesso di starsene fuori per motivo di salute, finché il Signore non ce ne liberi.”



A questioning of the accepted moral values of the Victorian era had accompanied the political and social turmoil of these years and all these factors may have combined to cause a fall in the numbers of those who were prepared to join the priesthood. Similarly in this period of change, the intellectual questioning and attempts at new solutions which was called the Modernist Crisis must have affected the general Catholic atmosphere in England, though there is little evidence of its having caused any ripples in the Salesian pond. Only Fr Marsh, according to the Battersea chronicler, managed to be denounced to Bishop Amigo, a renowned Modernist hunter, and friend of Cardinal Merry Del Val, for 'spiritualism', and was dispatched post haste to America. Perhaps the various social crises of the time did slow down the upward trend of recruitment though the advent of the war itself meant that the trend became almost downward. (See graphs 1 and 2.) Having said all that, probably the more significant dynamic for the Salesians in England was an internal one.

### **The impact of War 1913-1918**

The period from 1913 to 1918 can be divided into two distinct parts. The dividing line between the two periods was 1915 after which Fr Scaloni found himself on the German side of the front line in Belgium unable to return to England after Italy entered the war. As a result, he was absent from the Province from 1915 to the end of the war. Although during this period Fr Macey did try to maintain some semblance of Provincial authority, it worked mostly by a policy of letting things remain as they were. In May 1916, Don Albera, the Superior General, formalised the position by appointing Fr Macey vice-Provincial in Fr Scaloni's absence in Belgium.

### *Anti-Italianism*

The years before the war were marked by the further rumblings of a crisis which had first shown itself in England on Fr Scaloni's arrival. However, it had been going on for years in South Africa where the very gifted but somewhat unbending figure of Fr Tozzi was annoying the English confrères.

Fr Scaloni described his dilemma to Fr Gusmano thus:

The fact is that poor Don Tozzi does not seem able to manage any longer, that Don Cerruti his only support is really very discouraged. On the other hand, in the last two years I have received letters from nearly all the confrères who plead for his removal.

I do not know how to decide, whether to ask the prefect and Rector to change, whom I know to be the the most virtuous and most capable

of all those that I can suggest from the English Province.<sup>66</sup>

While it was certainly true that they were very capable, it is also the case that Fr Tozzi was very much out of sympathy with the English confrères, the more so when he became aware of the immorality which had been taking place at Battersea.

Fr Scaloni quoted another witness, the cleric Steinherr, a German

According to Tozzi an excellent confrère, returned home to do his military service, and of really excellent spirit, tells me that in that house everyone is unhappy with Fr Tozzi because they find him much too severe, not expansive nor affectionate enough and so on.<sup>67</sup>

The effects of Fr Scaloni's efforts to dismiss the offenders and the fact that Fr Macey seemed to have leaked the contents of Fr Goy's letter as far as he knew them, led to a resurgence of the anti-italian feeling that had greeted Fr Scaloni's arrival.

That poor man Fr L. had finished up by submitting materially but does nothing about his new destination and writes to all the bishops of Ireland and America to get himself accepted. Fr Mc. does the same and Fr McG had fled to the United States, ...where it is said he sells milk on the streets of New York.

Finding out from Fr Macey that Goy had spoken ill of him and of Battersea, among the priests and clerics at Battersea, anti-Italian feelings are on the ascent once again. Patience...<sup>68</sup>

Another feature which caused some ill-feeling between Fr Macey and the Italian superiors was the case of Fr Charles Buss, who had gone out to Italy as a novice and had worked there and in the United States and who now returned to Battersea and was apparently almost an invalid though still a young man. Fr Macey added that he never belonged to the

<sup>66</sup> S31.22 Inghilterra. Scaloni - Gusmano 4.1.1913: "Il fatto sta che il povero D. Tozzi sembra di non poterne più e che D. Cerruti, il suo unico sostegno, è pure molto scoraggiato. D'altra parte, nei due ultimi anni, ho ricevuto lettere di quasi tutti i confratelli, che ci supplicano di richiamarli [...]. Io non saprei risolvermi a domandare il cambiamento del direttore e del prefetto, che sono i più virtuosi ed i più capaci di tutti coloro che potrei suggerire della ispettoria inglese."

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.: "Il ch. Steinherr, ottimo confratello secondo Tozzi, rivenuto per motivo del suo servizio militare e proprio di spirito eccellente, mi dice che tutti in quella casa sono malcontenti di D. Tozzi, perchè lo trovano troppo severo, poco espansivo, di poco cuore, et similia."

<sup>68</sup> S31.22 Inghilterra. Scaloni - Gusmano 25.10.1913: "Il povero D.L. ha finito col sottomettersi materialmente; ma non fa nulla nella sua nuova destinazione e scrive a tutti i vescovi d'Irlanda e di America per farsi accettare... D. McG fa lo stesso. D. McG fuggi negli Stati Uniti presso The Very Rev. J.O'Reilly, In the Bishop's House, Fargo, North Dakota, USA. Ora si dice che vada vendendo il latte nelle strade di N.Y. Non so ciò che vi sia di vero. Saputosi da D. Macey che D. Goy avrebbe parlato male di lui e di Battersea [...], i sentimenti anti-italiani si scatenano di nuovo... Pazienza! È già la 4ª volta che questa parola mi sfugge..."

English Province and the Provincial in the United States was effectively dumping him.

Fr Buss, however, provides one of the most interesting insights on the situation at Battersea under Fr Macey. Fr Macey described his miraculous cure from all his maladies immediately upon the news of his appointment as a military chaplain, early in the war. It was almost as if, when the prison doors of the enclosed system at Battersea began to open, the living dead rose to new life.

#### C. BUSS

A miracle of the first order had happened to Fr Buss. Up until the moment when he was named as a Chaplain, he could not see, he wore dark glasses, got up late in the morning and looked like an old man of sixty. He could not sleep, he had an amazing number of things wrong with him but, thank God, he always had an excellent appetite. The moment I repeat, that he knew that he was accepted as a military Chaplain, he became, all at once, another man...<sup>69</sup>

A more obvious cause of disagreement between the English and Italian confrères occurred as a result of the decisions which Fr Simonetti was making about the suitability of candidates for the Novitiate. Fr Macey felt that his candidates were being refused entry because of a lack of Latin and not a lack of basic educational qualifications. He maintained that primary or elementary education in Italy was not the same as elementary education in England.

In the sixth and seventh standard of our English Government schools, our only primary schools, the same subjects are taught as in the third or fourth or even the fifth year of the *Gimnasio* or secondary school in Italy.<sup>70</sup>

In February of 1915, Fr Scaloni managed to obtain permission from the German Authorities to visit Italy, at that point, a neutral power travelling via Belgium. After April 1915, he found himself in the German occupied zone of Belgium unable to visit England or Italy.

#### *Fr Scaloni's absence*

In April 1915 Fr Macey was writing to Fr Scaloni in Turin explaining

<sup>69</sup> S.31.22 Inghilterra. Macey - Gusmano 1.11.1915: "Un miracolo del primo ordine è stato fatto per Don Buss. Fino al momento nel quale era nominato capellano non poteva vedere, portava occhiali neri, s'alzava molto tardi e sembrava un vecchio di 60 anni. Non poteva dormire, aveva un numero straordinario di malattie, ma grazie a Dio aveva sempre un'eccellente appetito. Il momento, ripeto, che egli seppe ch'era accettato come capellano militare diventò subito un'altro uomo."

<sup>70</sup> S.31.22 Inghilterra. Macey - Simonetti: Sept. 13, 1914.

the difficulties of sending any students to Italy to study during the war because of a shortage of money and their being busy with University exams. He then provided a clue to Fr Scaloni's plans, namely to re-enter Belgium, despite the war.

I am very happy to hear that it is difficult to re-enter Belgium, because then you will come and stay here in London with us. Come therefore as soon as possible and we shall be delighted.<sup>71</sup>

At the same time it was soon obvious that Fr Macey was acting as the resident superior.

The Cardinal has sent me the faculties for Fr Jones but we are waiting for orders from the 'Admiralty' for his departure. Perhaps you have already informed Don Migone that Fr Jones will be with him very soon and the office he will have on the Malvinas Islands.<sup>72</sup>

Moving Fr Jones to the Falklands as a naval chaplain was the prelude to the islands coming under the care of the English Salesians during the post-war period, but it also showed that Cardinal Bourne still regarded Fr Macey as being in charge.

By July 1915, Fr Macey was suggesting that any changes of Superiors which Fr Scaloni had planned should be postponed till a better time. In August, after the Retreat, he wrote in a similar vein:

We are finishing the Retreat and if the Superiors of Wandsworth and Chertsey have to be changed, it would be well to have the letters of Obedience sent very soon.

Fr Scaloni was proposing to make these changes when he went to Turin and he wrote to me to say that everything had been arranged with the Major Superiors. It seems to me that since the Provincial cannot come here for some time yet — probably the Germans will be expelled from France and Belgium in the month of October — it might be better to wait until he comes. As well as that, the six years does not come to an end until the coming January.

Please send me a note in reply.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup> S.31.22 Inghilterra. Macey - Ispettore: April 12, 1915 (to Fr Scaloni in Italy): "Sono molto contento di sentire che è difficile di rientrare nel Belgio, perché così verrà qui a Londra, e si fermerà con noi. Venga dunque il più presto possibile e noi saremo contentissimi."

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.: "Il cardinale mi ha mandato la facoltà per Don Jones, ma aspetta le direzioni dell'Admiralty per la sua partenza. Forse Ella ha già informato D. Migone che Don Jones sarà con lui fra poco e l'ufficio che avrà alle Isole Malvine..."

<sup>73</sup> S.31.22 Inghilterra. Aug. 5, 1915 Macey - Barberis: "Stiamo terminando gli Esercizi Spirituali, e se il Superiore di Wandsworth, e quello di Chertsey devono essere cambiati, sarebbe bene che le lettere di ubbidienza siano mandate il più presto. Il sig. Don Scaloni, so, propose di fare questi cambiamenti quando venne a Torino, e mi scrisse che tutto era aggiustato coi Superiori Maggiori [...] probabilmente i Tedeschi saranno scacciati dalla Francia e Belgio nel mese d'Ottobre, sarebbe meglio di aspettare la sua venuta (Fr Scaloni's). Inoltre i sei anni non spireranno fino al Gennajo prossimo."

Macey then went on to voice his fears that all the students for the priesthood would be called up, and to explain that they were suffering great financial straits.

### **The problem of Farnborough**

One problem that Fr Macey had to face was prompted by a letter of protest sent to Fr Macey by a diocesan priest from Stoke-on-Trent who had sent a couple of boys to Farnborough, hoping to train them for the Seminary.<sup>74</sup> In fact he complained bitterly about the lack of proper teaching, the fact that instead of the Salesian 'Preventive System' there was frequent corporal punishment inflicted by the brothers, and that at times with distinct brutality. He also objected to the style of education dominated by public exams, which encouraged the boys to write out prepared translations of set authors repeatedly and learn them by heart, for examination purposes. He also objected to the class work being badly prepared by the brothers, who were often late for class and frequently gave the boys bad example. He therefore wished the boys to be transferred to Battersea.

Fr Macey sent this letter to Turin to explain the measures he felt ought to be taken against Fr Sutherland, the Rector at Farnborough, who had become something of a law unto himself. He had expanded the school's numbers from about forty to 130 and had promoted public examinations in every class and a very competitive ethos throughout. Given that the numbers of Salesians on the staff remained fairly constant and that the priests seemed to do very little teaching, then, the strain of expanding numbers had to be taken by the unqualified and untrained clerics, and it was obviously beginning to tell.

At a more serious level, Fr Sutherland had determined, with the encouragement of Bishop Cotter, a fellow Irishman and close friend, to change the school from an Orphanage (originally called 'The Soldiers' Boys Home') to a middle class Secondary School, called St. Anselm's. This title never really caught on, but the change from being the Salesian Institute (an orphanage) to becoming the Salesian College (a middle class secondary school) took place largely under Fr Sutherland's leadership and inspiration.

As regards Farnborough, I have talked in turn to all the confrères and also the Superior and I hope that things might go better. In my opinion, the cure for this house would be a good priest as Prefect or Catechist. A priest, moreover, of whom, Fr Sutherland would have a certain fear, Fr Rabagliati or Fr Simonetti as Catechist.

<sup>74</sup> S.31.22 Inghilterra. Dec. 28, 1915: Alfred E. Whittington - Macey.

It would be useless to send an English priest. At present the Prefect of that house is Fr Gicquel, who is a good man, but absolutely incapable of acting as Prefect — he has the title, nothing more.

The Catechist is a boy, hardly ordained and who is, therefore, timid who will not say a word to anyone. Many times I said to Fr Sutherland that he needs a good priest as Prefect or Catechist, but he does not want one at any price. The fact is that he wants to do it all himself.<sup>75</sup>

Fr Sutherland's independent attitude, confirmed all Fr Macey's fears of the Irish capacity for independent action.

In 1917, Fr Sutherland, acting independently of Fr Macey, had asked for letters dimissorial authorising the Ordination of his clerics to avoid their being conscripted. Fr Macey was totally out of sympathy with Sutherland's motivation. Moreover, he accused Fr Sutherland of acting without the Provincial Council's permission and even buying a piece of property worth L.500 without asking permission.<sup>76</sup>

In 1919, Fr Macey went so far as to write to the Superior General about the situation:

First of all, I should say that I do not approve and have not approved for some time of what our Fr Sutherland has been doing at Farnborough. ...He has rather grandiose ideas. He wants Farnborough to be a College like those of the Jesuit Fathers, for boys of the upper class and for that reason has changed the character of the school, he has put up the fees to L.22 a school year, excluding the extras which take it up to L.30 a year. He never accepts anyone for nothing, and never takes boys who want to become Salesians unless they pay.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> S.31.22 Inghilterra. Macey - Albera, March 13, 1916: "In quanto alla casa di Farnborough, ho seriamente parlato con tutti i confratelli ed ancora al Superiore, e spero che faranno meglio. A me sembra che per mettere un rimedio in quella casa ci vuole un buon prete come prefetto, o catechista. Un prete però del quale Don Sutherland avrebbe una certa paura. Non potrò suggerire altri che o Don Rabagliati come prefetto o Don Simonetti come catechista. Sarebbe inutile di mandare un prete Inglese. Al presente il prefetto di quella casa è Don Gicquel che è un buon uomo, assolutamente incapace di fare del prefetto, ha il nome e nient'altro [...]. Il Catechista è un ragazzo, appena ordinato, che è così timido che non oserebbe di dire una parola a nessuno. Molte volte ho detto a don Sutherland che ha bisogno di un buon prete come prefetto o catechista, ma egli non ne volle assolutamente. Il fatto è che egli desidera di fare tutto lui."

<sup>76</sup> S.31.22 Inghilterra. Macey - Albera, 19 Feb. 1919: "Primo di tutto le dirò che non approvo, e non ho approvato da molto tempo cio' che il nostro don Sutherland fa a Farnborough [...]. Ha delle grandi idee; egli vuol avere a Farnborough un Coleggio come quei dei Padri Gesuiti, per giovani della classe superiora, e per questo ha cambiato il carattere della sua scuola, ha alzata la pensione a 22 sterline pel anno scolastico, senza 'the extras' i quali arrivano colla pensione a L.30 per anno. Egli non accetto nessuno per niente, nè a prezzo ridotto, e non ha mai ricevuto un giovane che vuol farsi Salesiano, senza pagamento..."

<sup>77</sup> S.31.22 Inghilterra. Macey - Albera, March 13, 1916: "Ho visitato la casa di Burwash, che adesso è quasi vuota. Tutti i novizi dell'anno scorso [...] sono partiti [...]. Io non capisco la



Fr Macey also objected to Fr Sutherland's love of getting himself in the newspapers, even the gutter press. A further cause of complaint was the great celebrations which Fr Sutherland had held at Farnborough for the Centenary of Don Bosco's birth, remarking that such banquets make the worst impression in times of penury. Further still, he had taken on the jobs of Military Chaplain, Town Councillor and Poor Law Guardian, all of which took him out of the house, without even asking permission. Relations between Fr Sutherland and Fr Macey could hardly have deteriorated further.

### Macey - Simonetti

The other area of conflict which had developed was that between Fr Simonetti and Fr Macey over the Novices

I have visited the house of Burwash, which is now practically empty. All last year's novices have left. I do not know why. Fr Simonetti is a holy man whom everyone respects but he doesn't know how to win the hearts of his novices. They do not love the house and are happy to leave. The general attitude of Fr Simonetti is one of rigid enforcement of his ideas and to many he seems cold and rather unsympathetic. The young novices sometimes need 'the milk of human kindness', and not drawing by the cords of a very strict supervision.<sup>78</sup>

Fr Macey then went on to claim that his own experience at San Benigno as a novice had not involved the same degree of strictness, and that none of the novices who had come through San Benigno under Don Barberis, except the odd paragon, would have been accepted at Burwash.

Fr Simonetti's reply was that in those days no one did things according to the Rule.

Here also there existed a lack of sympathy between the strict views of Fr Simonetti and Fr Macey's claim to a more authentic tradition, and this marked another step on the road towards the later conflict between the English and Italian Salesians.

cosa, Don Simonetti è un santo uomo che tutti rispettano, ma non sa guadagnare i cuori dei suoi novizi. Essi non amano la casa e sono tutti contenti di partire. L'attitudine generale di Don Simonetti è di *'rigid enforcement of his ideas'* ed a molti sembrerà freddo e poco simpatico. I giovani novizi hanno bisogno qualche volta del latte *'of human kindness and drawing on by the cords of Adam'*."

<sup>78</sup> SDB Battersea House Archives: *Salesian School Magazine* (Hereafter SSM) Various numbers from 1911 till 1925. The Farnborough Magazine dates from the end of the First World War and Thornleigh College Bolton from 1925. SSM Christmas 1911, p. 14, 15.



### Daily life in a Salesian School

One of the problems that any social historian faces is how to get a balanced impression of the daily lives of those he studies. Confidential Visitation reports and contemporary private correspondence are obviously very important sources for this but they tend of their nature to be problem centred. Another valuable source for assessing the daily experience and self understanding of those involved must be any published material and in the case of the Salesians in England we have the resource of early school magazines. Far from being problem centred, of course, they consciously attempted to publish the most attractive sides of school life for the benefit of parents, past pupils and prospective parents and yet they do reveal real aspects of the participants' experience and self understanding.

From 1911 onwards, a regular *Salesian School Magazine* began to appear from Battersea under the editorial hand of Fr Walter Austen, and it was subsequently imitated by the schools at Farnborough from 1919 and after the First World War also at Bolton. Through school chronicles, sports reports, other articles and photographs, the magazines bore witness to the literary skills of staff and pupils and the growing self-confidence and affluence of the schools as the numbers of pupils rose.

The initiative which appears to have prompted the foundation of the magazine was the beginning of the Salesian Old Boys Association at Battersea in 1910, which used to hold its annual meeting in late January near the feast of St Francis of Sales and had another reunion for the annual football match, Past against Present later in the year. The Magazine partly aimed at encouraging the association of Old Boys with the school.

However, central to the purpose of the magazine, no doubt, was the aim of raising the tone of the school, no longer a sort of junior seminary for poorer boys, as it had begun, but now an aspiring middle class school. Fr J. McCourt, the first Headmaster, trained very much in the English tradition at the Hammersmith Training College, who took over from Fr Bonavia, said as much in an article commenting on the first number of the magazine in 1911.<sup>79</sup>

Doubtless, the main impression of the first number was that the school had now assumed a new importance, risen to a higher level... Not only does the scholastic side feel this heightening of tone, but the athletic or games side shares the additional prestige. No school that pretends to a place among its contemporaries allows its games to fall into a half hearted, second rate condition; not that we overestimate their importance, but teachers are fully alive to the fact that healthy rivalry and excellence in games are, more likely than not, accompanied by good work at lessons; for the two need not at all be considered as

<sup>79</sup> SSM. 1911, p. 26.

incompatible... While school influences are in some respects a lasting accompaniment to life, it too often happens that the change from tutelage to individual responsibility does not stand the shock of meeting with the new forces of a life in difficult surroundings. We do not claim that the magazine, nor the Association combined with it, can overcome that constantly recurring danger, but if it can raise the aspirations of our past or awake to new resolves, its undertaking will have been amply repaid.

Fr McCourt's comments reflect his view of the style of education he was involved in, his interest in raising the tone of the school to a place among its contemporaries and also his acceptance of the prevailing English public school belief in competitive games as the way to educate gentlemen, tempered only by his assertion that scholastic standards would not suffer, a concern no doubt to aspiring middle class parents about what they regarded as a 'commercial' school. The influence of the English public school 'classical' ethos constrained by the necessity of 'useful' education for an aspiring middle class represents clearly the cross-currents of English Catholic education in this period. However, the absence of any overtly religious or particularly Salesian material in this statement of purpose may well reflect a growing consciousness of the need to package and sell the product to fee paying parents and the absence of any very well-informed understanding of the particular Salesian identity. To this extent, the Magazines do support an impression of a distancing of the schools from a consciously Salesian or overtly religious inspiration. The pattern which Fr McCourt established at Battersea where he was headmaster from 1898 till 1919, he then proceeded to implant at Farnborough where he was Rector from 1919 till 1922, then at Pallaskenry from 1922-25 and finally at Bolton where he was Rector from 1925-1931. The idea of the School Magazines, the pattern of secondary education offered were all shaped by his own understanding and training. As we have noted elsewhere Fr McCourt and the generation of Salesians trained at the Hammersmith Teacher Training College ensured the conformity of the Salesian Schools in England to the prevailing English educational pattern with the introduction of corporal punishment to Salesian schools, a feature which only disappeared from the system after a European Court ruling in the 1980s.

Having said that, in the second paragraph quoted it is evident that Fr McCourt was trying to grapple with the current educational problems as he saw them, of the necessary transition from the prevailing structured atmosphere of a school to the individual responsibility of difficult situations outside. What he could hardly have realised was how traumatically different that situation was to become in the years between 1914-1918.

On the other hand, the magazines represent development in a very characteristically Salesian and non-English direction. They were the direct result of Fr Scaloni's clear understanding and interest in the development

of Salesian technical education particularly in the area of printing. The *Salesian School Magazine* is one of the first products of the Salesian Press, Surrey Lane, Battersea, and although there is no mention in the magazines of a trades or technical aspect to the school itself (because it seems any artisans went to the parish elementary school until they began their apprenticeships) yet the magazines themselves represent a mute testimony to this important characteristically Salesian innovation at Battersea.

### **Salesian features of school life**

The school chronicles for each year and for each school testify to the presence of some of the most creative features of the Salesian educational tradition during the period. The importance of celebrations as occasions for integrating the community and social aspects of education with the personal, spiritual and imaginative sides of life were repeatedly acknowledged on the Salesian feasts.

On the 24th May 1911, the Battersea Sodality outing, a reward for the most hard working and cooperative groups of pupils (about a third of the school were in the sodalities), involved a trip to the Fair at Riddlestown near Purley in the Surrey countryside. Performing monkeys, coconut shies and donkey rides were the order of the day followed by a splendid tea in the great hall and a return to Clapham Junction for 7.00p.m. in time for the feast day cinematographic show.<sup>80</sup>

Although, since the machine was presented to Fr Macey a year ago, we have several times had opportunities of enjoying its picture, we never seem to tire of them but each exhibition gives us more pleasure than its predecessor.

Another important aspect of the ability to celebrate was the importance given to the theatre. Fr Macey himself had originally been the leading light in this field, no doubt drawing on his own early experience of amateur dramatics in his youth in Salisbury. Long accounts of performances were featured each year with appropriate critical comments.<sup>81</sup>

It was quite different from any previous play because nothing happened to the scenery. In "Alladin" quite a lot of things tumbled down, and even the airship — the painful outcome of weeks of careful thought, did not make a very successful descent, it reached the ground, but so did the occupant, but the latter one first.

In the Pallaskeny chronicle 1925-26, the pattern of feast-day cel-

<sup>80</sup> SSM. 1911, p. 22.

<sup>81</sup> SSM. 1911, p. 28.

celebrations with football and hurling matches and High teas and Rector's treats for choir and actors were already well established.

The religious side of the school received mention in the annual religious inspection, the visits of eminent ecclesiastics, such as Cardinal Bourne, Bishop Amigo, and various Salesian dignitaries and the annual three day retreat.<sup>82</sup>

The retreat lasted from Tuesday evening to Saturday morning. We always find that a retreat is rather awe-inspiring in the prospect, but far from unpleasant in reality; and although we were glad to be "out", everyone had enjoyed the three days of unaccustomed quiet and deeper thought on higher things.

June 11th

His Lordship the Bishop of Southwark did us the great honour of visiting us in order to raise to the priesthood the Rev. Bro. John Conway. Apart from the natural gratification of welcoming one of his exalted dignity, we had also the pleasant anticipation of enjoying his most entertaining speeches to the boys... In replying, his Lordship kept us amused for half an hour, that was all very well in its way, but we had an ulterior purpose in view. We demanded that the occasion should be celebrated by a holiday and that favour his Lordship also conceded.

Accounts of football and cricket matches filled the rest of the school boy's chronicles marked also by celebrations in 1911 for the coronation of King George V.

From the correspondence section it is evident that most of the Old Boys seem to have found themselves work in traditional lower middle class occupations, clerks, teachers, businessmen, very many abroad, and one even became a sculptor (M. Voss) with his studio in Paris.<sup>83</sup>

Though from 1911 a drill sergeant had been appointed to take on Physical training at Battersea, yet up till the 1914 edition there was little evidence of the closeness of war. But after that until 1919's peace edition, the magazine was filled up with photographs of Old Boys in uniform, and letters from the Front. By 1919, Battersea had a large Cadet Corps in the school. What was unusual and points to the particular nature of the school was the number of nations represented by its Old Boys under arms in 1916.<sup>83</sup> Though the vast majority fought with English regiments in the British army [62], there were also groups of past pupils in the Scots [6] and Irish regiments [5]. The Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Flying Corps had only one each while the Royal Navy only four. More unusual was the fact that the second largest groups of past pupils actually fought

<sup>82</sup> SSM. 1911, p. 29.

<sup>83</sup> SSM. Midsummer 1916. No. 10, p. 15-16.

N.B. In this chapter sometimes the names of the individuals involved have been reduced to their initials.

in the French army [8] and the Italian army [5]. Other national armies represented among the Battersea Old Boys were South Africa [3], Canada [2], Australia [1], New Zealand [1], and strangest of all Serbia [1]. Most served as private soldiers with about a dozen as officers, the highest rank being reached that of Captain. The group of Frenchmen probably dated from the orphans that the French Salesians brought to England with them in 1902. As well as them at least three Salesians served as Chaplains in the army, Frs Harrod, Moss and Buss. Overall then, Battersea at least had a strangely international flavour in these years. The so-called French ref. where in later years boarders could pay more for an improved diet may well date back to the French contingent.

Though the first World War shaped the Magazine while it lasted and may well have been the main cause of its success and survival, due perhaps to the desire of past pupils in the mayhem of war to identify with stable elements in the world of their the past, still by 1925, there was little or no sign of the war except that the schools numbers had remained at about 250, a figure they achieved under the impact of war.

Apart from the omnipresent uniforms, daily life in the school even during the war seemed to be very little affected apart from the stream of Old Boys returning from France and the prospect for the older boys of being immediately conscripted into the army on their departure from school and the inevitable lists of dead and wounded. Forty Old Boys' names appeared on the memorial plaque in the college chapel painted by Fr Fayers.

The Salesian Schools in England had by 1918 been modelled on Battersea as it was developed by Fr McCourt and largely corresponded to the prevailing English model of secondary education for the poorer aspiring middle class catholic. Dominated from the third year by external examinations either of the Oxford Local Examination Board or the College of Preceptors: subjects such as Accounts, English, Mathematics, History, Science, Geography and even Latin made regular appearances in the list of certificates, but it found little place for technical crafts, or at the other extreme for Greek, Physics, Chemistry or Biology. At the same time a particular fondness for community celebrations and theatrical work as well as games, often attached to major liturgical celebrations and an identification with the church authorities mark the school as special.

The question that could, perhaps, be asked was how far there was any conscious understanding of the Salesian ethos within the school?

## **Conclusions**

The second half of the Fr Scaloni's first period in office was deeply marked by the fact that he was effectively absent from the Province from the beginning of the war. In his absence the Salesians were becoming more

and more absorbed into the prevailing English Catholic cultural situation, with its emphasis on middle class secondary education for boys, and where as Parish priests they could occasionally play the role of Town Councillor and Poor Law Guardian, seeing it as their natural leadership position. However, in the process, what was lost was any very clear awareness of the particular mission of the Salesians to young people who were poor or abandoned and any real attempt to introduce the traditional works of the Society such as oratories or technical schools to the English scene. The Vision that had inspired the foundation of the Salesians in England had indeed faded. One wonders what else was needed to make it a terminal case.



## **A VISION REBORN: HOPES FOR THE FUTURE (1919-1926)**

In these last two years, many abuses have been done away with, many confrères are beginning to have a higher idea of the Congregation and a new generation is being formed... and thus we can rightly have the best of hopes for the not too distant future. (Fr F. Scalonì, 16 Nov. 1921)

### **Post war revival**

The early post-war period saw an extraordinary flourishing of the English Province. The number of Salesians doubled from eighty in 1920 to one hundred and sixty in 1925, while in those same years two agricultural schools were begun in Ireland and a new secondary school at Bolton in the North of England. As the foundation and key to this growth a new house of studies was opened at Cowley in Oxford.

The transfer of the novices and students of Philosophy from Burwash, known as 'the cemetery of the Province', to Oxford, which Fr Franco referred to as that 'centre of learned Anglicanism',<sup>1</sup> marked a newly developed confidence and a change of approach to the Salesian work in England. The Salesians suddenly seemed ready to join the other older Catholic religious orders who had set up houses of studies in Oxford: the Jesuits at Campion Hall in 1896, the Benedictines at St Benet's Hall in 1897, the Dominicans who opened Blackfriars in 1921 and the Franciscan Capuchins whose old house the Salesians were going to take over, while the Capuchins moved down to open Greyfriars on the Iffley Road.<sup>2</sup> Though the house in Cowley was situated on a hill overlooking the city, and the Salesians similarly remained somewhat aloof, it was not long before the first Salesian students were preparing to start their studies at the University. The claustrophobic atmosphere which had built up at Battersea in the years before and during the First World War, was rapidly being replaced by a new sense of openness and purpose.

<sup>1</sup> ACS. S.389. Burwash: Franco - Albera (3.6.1920): "L'ambiente di Oxford sia dal punto di vista Cattolico (vi sono chiese di Gesuiti, Benedettini, Francescani, Domenicani) sia dal punto di vista protestante (è il centro dell'anglicanismo dotto) è un ambiente intellettuale e noi non dovremmo far una brutta figura..."

<sup>2</sup> *Catholic Directory* (London, 1982), p. 105.



This change of direction was due to two very diverse movements. On the one hand, the growing political movement for Irish independence and a separate Irish identity found expression among the Irish Salesians in England in the person and action of Fr Aloysius Sutherland. He managed almost single handedly, and initially, at least, without the approval of Fr Macey, to commence the Salesian work in Ireland, and by 1924 had two agricultural schools well underway. On the other, Fr Macey's faltering authority, largely ignored by Fr Sutherland, was replaced by the return from Belgium of Fr Francis Scaloni, now ably assisted by the eminently qualified Fr Angelo Franco. Under the impetus of their enlightened leadership and deep concern for the intellectual and spiritual formation of the clerics, it was possible for the Province to respond to the new opportunities and challenges which the post-war period presented.

### *Problems to be faced*

Fr Scaloni recorded his assessment of the situation which faced him on his return, in a letter he sent to Turin. He felt that he was being blamed for the stagnation which appeared to have gripped the Province in the previous decade. He wrote to Don Fascie in November 1921:

Since Fr Albera, of dear memory, to whom I made known the state of the Province both verbally and in writing is now in heaven, I am afraid that the members of the Superior Chapter know little about our affairs. The echoes of certain remarks, not to say reproaches, even though hidden, make my fears quite other than groundless. Permit me, therefore, to explain our affairs succinctly, but in full, giving the broad outlines of the difficulties against which I have to battle...<sup>3</sup>

First of all, he explained the early difficulties he had had to labour under.

The Provincial was nominated in the scholastic year 1909-10, but he still remained Provincial of Belgium and therefore, was effectively unable to do more than make two or three visits a year. He was ignorant of the language and was, therefore, obliged for no short time, to hear the '*rendiconti*' of the confrères and deal with business through an interpreter. Under such conditions, it is easy to guess how much he had to suffer, what difficulties he had to encounter in order to have an exact idea of the state of affairs and how modest might be the result of his

<sup>3</sup> ACS. S31.22 Inghilterra: Scaloni - Fascie (16.11.1921), p. 1: "Il Sig. Don Albera, di cara memoria, al quale verbalmente e per iscritto facevo conoscere lo stato dell'Ispettorìa, è in cielo, ed io temo assai che i membri del Cap. Sup. conoscano poco le cose nostre. L'eco di certi rilievi, anche di biasimi appena celati, rende il mio timore tutt'altro che vano. Mi permetta dunque che le esponga succintamente, ma in tutte le sue grandi linee, le difficoltà contro le quali sto dibattendomi."

action and how even this limited action might easily be paralysed when his duty recalled him to Belgium.

Then, he explained that he had been effectively absent from the Province completely during the war.

Such a situation lasted right up to the end of 1913. In the first days of January 1914, he left for the Cape of Good Hope and for the Congo. He returned in June, meanwhile the war broke out in the first days of August which suppressed all communication with England till Easter 1919 with the exception of one month in 1915. His action, therefore, with regard to the English Province was perforce nil for practically six years, a time in which the spirit of independence developed in an unsettling way, while the violations of the vow of poverty increased and became chronic, as also, all the logical consequences of these two pernicious parasites of the religious life.<sup>4</sup>

### *Fr Sutherland and Ireland*

One of the chief faults that Fr Scaloni remarked on was the spirit of independence that had grown up during his enforced absence. He recognised that the tendency for each Rector to become a law unto himself had taken a very deep hold, particularly where the Rector concerned had ideas of his own. Though Fr Macey was appointed Vice-Provincial in 1916 in the absence of Fr Scaloni, this office did not exist in the rule of the Congregation at this time, so it is not altogether surprising that he very quickly found himself out-manoeuvred by a rising star like Fr Aloysius Sutherland.

Fr Sutherland was born at Rosemount, Shanakiel, Co. Cork on December 23th 1880,<sup>5</sup> the last of 14 children. He was educated at the

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2,3: "Egli fu nominato nell'anno scolastico 1909-10, ma rimanendo Ispettore del Belgio e nell'impossibilità di fare più di 2 o 3 visite annue; ignaro della lingua inglese, e quindi obbligato, per non poco tempo, a ricevere i rendiconti e trattare gli affari per mezzo d'interprete. In tali condizioni, è facile arguire quanto egli dovesse soffrire, quante difficoltà incontrasse per farsi un'idea esatta delle cose, quanto modesto dovesse essere il risultato della sua azione, e come questa stessa sua limitata azione fosse facilmente paralizzata, quando il suo dovere lo richiamava nel Belgio. Tale situazione durò sino alla fine del 1913. Ai primi di Gennaio del 1914, egli partì per il Capo di Buona Sper. e per il Congo. Ritornò in Giugno, mentre la guerra, scoppiata ai primi di Agosto, gli sopprime ogni comunicazione con Inghilterra, sino verso Pasqua del 1919, salvo un mese nel 1915. La sua azione dunque sull'Ispettorato inglese fu forzatamente nulla per questi 6 anni, tempo in cui lo spirito d'indipendenza si sviluppò in modo inquietante, mentre le violazioni del voto di povertà crebbero e divennero croniche, come eziandio tutte le logiche conseguenze di questi due perniciosi tarli della vita religiosa."

<sup>5</sup> SDB Archives GB: Mortuary Letter Fr Aloysius Sutherland. It should be noted that there is a discrepancy between the date given in the Profession Book, (23.12.1880) and that in the Mortuary Letter (24.12.1882), of which the former would appear more likely, with Fr Sutherland entering at 17 years of age.

Dominican College, Newbridge, Co. Kildare, and qualified, according to his mortuary letter, to enter the Royal College of Surgeons, (an unlikely claim, given that the Royal College is only open to eminent Surgeons, though perhaps he was qualified for medical school). At any event, he entered the Salesian community, Battersea on 17th March, 1897, where he was among the first Salesians to gain a Queen's Scholarship to the Catholic Training College at Hammersmith, and become a qualified teacher.

He moved from Burwash to Farnborough as Rector in the wake of Fr Virion's visitation in 1909. There he set out to make his mark, transforming the orphanage into a boys' grammar school, much to the disgust of Fr Macey. He was aided and abetted in his plans by a willing collaborator and friend, Bishop William T. Cotter, another Irishman and Bishop of Portsmouth from 1910. However, Fr Sutherland's vision was not restricted to Farnborough. With one brother a Dominican bishop in Trinidad, and another legal officer for the new (strictly illegal) Irish Government, working in the Land Commission, he soon began to look back to his homeland as the proper field for expansion. However, given Fr Macey's disapproval of the Irish independence movement, Fr Sutherland realised his need for some influential allies who could plead his cause in Turin, if his dream was to be fulfilled. This would seem to have been nothing less than the setting up of an independent Irish Province. A parallel movement among the Irish Redemptorists had been successful at the turn of the century.<sup>6</sup>

### **Fr Simonetti's support**

His choice fell upon Fr James Simonetti, long-serving novice Master, and someone who was in regular correspondence with the Superiors in Turin. According to Fr Simonetti's account dating from March 1918:

Meanwhile, I happened to be there [Farnborough] when Fr Sutherland received a letter from his brother, a lawyer, employed by the Irish government — a letter of which I am sending you a copy and which I hope will give you much pleasure.

That best of confrères (Fr Sutherland) wrote immediately to his Bishop, Mgr. Cotter of Portsmouth, our great friend and friend of many of the Irish episcopate, asking him to investigate if the Ordinary of the Archdiocese of Tuam would have difficulty in receiving us, but he immediately replied that the better course was for him to go and see the

<sup>6</sup> Sharp J., *'Reapers of the Harvest'* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London 1986) Chapter Three deals with the conflict between Irish and English Redemptorists leading to the foundation of an Irish Province.

Archbishop of Tuam. As soon as I heard news of this, I insisted that Fr Sutherland go immediately to Ireland, assuring him that you would approve of it. (I hope I was not mistaken, if I was, I beg your pardon and beg you to put it down to a lack of experience.)

At the same time when I was at Farnborough, the same Rector took me to see a property with a house which adjoins our own, Fr Sutherland is negotiating to buy it and the business is almost complete but I do not believe that Fr Macey is informed of it...<sup>7</sup>

Faced with this *fait accompli*, Fr Macey wrote to Turin a few months later, reporting without enthusiasm that Fr McConville had attended a meeting of the Irish Hierarchy and ascertained that

...eight bishops and Cardinal Logue are in sympathy with the project, which means very little. Two of them are willing to admit the Salesians into their dioceses. No one had offered to provide them with a house or to give them any material assistance.

At the meeting, Fr McConville was allowed to explain to them the nature of the Salesian work. At its conclusion, they said there was no need for industrial schools for poor boys as they were well provided... but they would welcome agricultural schools where boys would be taught the newest methods of agriculture... the properties in prospect are the Abbey, Templemore and Mount Shannon...<sup>8</sup>

Fr Macey, evidently, had little enthusiasm for this new project, probably because the war was hardly over and the disturbed state of Ireland made it, he felt, an unsuitable time to make a foundation, giving comfort to the Sinn Feiners. The Irish Bishops themselves, were also preoccupied with the problems of the 'Black and Tan' revenge raids and trying to avoid condemning the Nationalist guerillas.

<sup>7</sup> ACS. S31 22 Inghilterra: Simonetti - Albera (18.3.1918): "Mentre mi trovava colà il Sig. Don Sutherland ricevette da un suo fratello — avvocato, impiegato del Governo in Irlanda — una lettera di cui Le mando copia e la cui lettura Le farà, spero, molto piacere. L'ottimo confratello scrisse subito al suo vescovo, Mgr. Cotter di Portsmouth (nostro grande amico e amico di molti membri dell'episcopato Irlandese) pregandolo ad investigare se l'Ordinario dell'Archidiocesi di Tuam avesse difficoltà a riceverci; ma gli fu subito risposto che la miglior cosa a farsi era d'andare subito a vedere l'Arcivescovo di Tuam. Io pure appena ebbi notizia della cosa insistei che D. Sutherland andasse subito in Irlanda, assicurandolo che Lei avrebbe approvato di ciò (spero di non aver sbagliato: se ho sbagliato La prego perdonare alla mia mancanza d'esperienza). Inoltre, mentre era a Farnborough, lo stesso Direttore mi condusse a vedere una proprietà, con casa, attigua alla nostra. Don Sutherland sta trattandone la compera e l'affare è quasi concluso, ma non credo che il Sig. D. Macey ne sia informato."

Mgr. Timothy Cotter: born in Cloyne, Ireland 21 Dec. 1866. Titular Bishop of Clazomene 15th Feb. 1905, he was translated to Portsmouth 24 Nov. 1910. *Hierarchia Cattolica* (Padova, 1974).

<sup>8</sup> ACS. S.31.22 Inghilterra. Macey - Very Rev. and Dear Father (Oct. 23, 1918). English version in Archive.

Another explanation of Fr Macey's attitude is provided by some comments Fr Rabagliati made on the difficulty Fr Macey found in accepting any new ideas from anyone else:

Fr Macey is as always, very good in many ways, but difficult to persuade in others. It is not possible to make a proposal which he has not thought of first. If it is something proposed by him, then he wants everyone to support it; but things proposed by others are laughed at. As I see it this is a great evil because it is not possible to make any new proposals without being made to look ridiculous. Certain things are done without permission because they know that if they ask permission, they will not get it and so they act on their own authority.<sup>9</sup>

### **The foundation of Pallaskenry**

In his old age, in 1947, Fr Sutherland set down for Fr Richard McElligot his own account of the foundation of the houses in Ireland. He claimed that during the visit of Fr Albera, the Superior General, to Farnborough in 1913, he had received authorisation to explore the possibilities of making a foundation in Ireland, and therefore, felt justified in acting independently of Fr Macey. He wrote:

For the new foundation, I felt that Dublin, the capital, would be the most suitable and nearest place for a start — and I thought a technical or agricultural as the most suitable schools for Ireland as there are too many secondary schools and Ireland needed agricultural and scientific teachers to help double the production of crops — I found it would be impossible to start in Dublin as my brother informed me. My brother was living at Sutton, Dublin and a great friend of Canon Petit, P.P. of Fairview. He introduced me to the canon who was confessor to Archbishop Walsh. The canon had already told my brother that the Archbishop was absolutely opposed to any new orders or congregations coming to Dublin and besides the Archbishop was growing old and feeble and had not long to live. I would be better to approach his successor.

Now Canon Petit would have been only too pleased to help me in getting into Dublin as he had been a personal friend of St. John Bosco when he was at the Irish College in Rome and he was really sorry at my

<sup>9</sup> ACS. S.31.22. Inghilterra. Rabagliati - Albera (24.6.1919): "Don Macey è sempre lo stesso. Molto buono in molte cose, ma difficile a persuaderlo in altre. Non si può fare una proposta che non sia schiacciata fin da principio. Se è qualche cosa proposta da lui, allora vuole che tutti la sopportino, ma cose proposte d'altri sono derise etc. questo è un gran male, perché non si osa mai far nuove proposte per non essere messo in ridicolo. Certe cose si fanno senza permesso, perché si sa che se si domanda non si ottiene e così s'agisce sulla propria autorità."

look of disappointment. "Don't worry", he said, "I will do something even better for you, I will give you a letter to my old friend and companion of Roman days, Dr. Hallinan, Bishop of Limerick. He also knew Don Bosco and he will not fail you".<sup>10</sup>

Through his brother who was a legal adviser to the Land Commission, Fr Sutherland knew what properties were up for sale, even away in the West, and one of these that he examined was at Templemore, on the main line from Dublin to Cork, with 500 acres of good land, but the Archbishop was opposed to the idea and Fr Sutherland counted himself lucky because it was soon to be burned down during 'the Troubles', as was another house he had his eye on in Co. Clare called Mount Shannon.

I thought it wise to see the Bishop of Limerick, who when I showed him Canon Petit's letter received me with open arms. He told me he stayed to help Don Bosco for one year in Turin, on his way back to Ireland, after his ordination and would have stayed longer if his bishop, Dr. O'Dwyer, had allowed him. He would like to be able to help the sons of Don Bosco but did not know what work to offer us, as there were enough secondary colleges in the diocese... I then, pointed out that we had not come to Ireland to start a secondary school but rather technical or agricultural schools — he was very pleased with the idea of an agricultural college and he informed me that Fr O'Donnell, afterwards Canon O'Donnell, p.p. of Kildimo and Pallaskenry, was negotiating the purchase of Copsewood for the Daughters of the Cross but the Bishop preferred that we took the estate for a school of agriculture... hence I started gathering all the details and making everything clear for the Superiors in Turin...<sup>11</sup>

Fr Macey informed Fr Ricaldone, the Prefect General, of the progress of Fr Sutherland's negotiations, and on learning of Bishop Hallinan's connection with Don Bosco professed himself converted to the plan.

I have just heard from Fr Sutherland. Accompanied by his brother who is on the Land Commission in Dublin... they next visited the Bishop of Limerick.

He said they should buy a large Gentleman's Mansion called Copsewood, together with 150 acres of land, situated about ten miles from Limerick. The owner of this property asks £8,000 for it. I am of the opinion that as the Bishop of Limerick has shown himself so well disposed towards us, we should accept his offer and settle there. I think we should make the owner of Copsewood a tentative offer of £5,000. If

<sup>10</sup> SDB Archives Dublin (Provincial Office, St Teresa's Rd. Crumlin, Dublin) Fr Sutherland's Memoirs: hereafter F.S.M. (a typescript dated 17th March 1947, from Battersea and addressed to Fr McElligot), p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.



the Superiors agree to this, they had better also say how much they would be prepared to pay if the owner refuses to sell it for £.5,000. In the meantime, Fr Sutherland will remain in Ireland awaiting your instructions.

I can add that this good Bishop (he is a Sinn Feiner, I'm sorry to say) wishes also to have *Le suore di M. Ausiliatrice* in his diocese. He would like them to establish themselves about five miles from Copsewood and he offers to give them L.1000 to help them get a house.

The reason why the Bishop of Limerick is so anxious to have the Salesians in his diocese is because when he was a young priest in Rome, he and a companion went to Turin to teach English to those clerics who were to be sent to the Missions, but because Don Bosco wanted them to become Salesians, they left and went to Ireland. I firmly believe that it is Don Bosco who is arranging this affair; why the very name of the property Copsewood means *Bosco*.

I remember hearing something about this when I first went to Turin about forty years ago and I have no doubt the Superiors will remember it.<sup>12</sup>

A rather different account of the foundation in Ireland is given in the *Chronicle of the House of Pallaskenry* in which Fr Peter McConville appears as the main agent, and may well depend directly on his diary or his personal recall of events. The chronicle begins with an account of the first negotiations, modifying with some very interesting apparently first hand details Fr Sutherland's later account

1917, the Superiors at Turin had often expressed the wish that a Salesian House should be opened in Ireland, and Fr McConville was charged to ascertain where a foundation could be made. He approached several of the Irish Bishops but none gave him any definite promise or assurance. Aug. 23rd 1917. On August 23rd he came to Limerick to see Dr O'Dwyer, the Bishop of Limerick, but he had not heard of his death and he arrived on the day of his funeral. He, however, saw the Vicar

<sup>12</sup> ACS. S31.22 Inghilterra. Macey - Ricaldone (19.11.1918) English version in Archive.

The Bishop of Limerick, Dr Denis Hallinan, had been involved as has been seen in Don Bosco's original project for bringing Irish Boys to the Oratory (chapter three). He returned to Ireland and became parish Priest at Newcastle West and subsequently vicar general to Dr. O'Dwyer whom he succeeded in 1918. In the Limerick Diocesan Archives (Bishop's House, Limerick) two volumes of his diaries, minutely kept from his return to Ireland (1876-83), show a man with a passionate interest in European and Irish politics. Almost every daily entry in the first volume contains a summary entitled *political* in which he recorded the various complexities of the Eastern Question and the Congress of Berlin and the death of Pius IX, and the various measures proposed by Gladstone to deal with the Irish Situation. However, as regards his personal feelings even on the death of his father, recorded in minute detail, there is almost no trace. As a Bishop he supported the Irish National cause, much to the disgust of Fr Macey and remained a friend of the Salesians till his death in 1923.



General, the Rev. D. Hallinan, and he made known to him the purpose of his visit. The Vicar General had known Don Bosco and was very sympathetic towards the project, but under the circumstances, he was unable to do anything, he proposed that Fr McConville should return to Limerick when a new bishop had been consecrated. He also promised that he would keep the project in mind and would do what he could when an opportunity occurred.

March 10, 1918. The Vicar General, the Rev. D. Hallinan was consecrated Bishop of Limerick on March 10th 1918 and Fr McConville immediately went to see him to remind him of his promise. Dr Hallinan was as good as his promise and gave his permission to the Salesians to open an Agricultural College in his diocese.

At the suggestion of Fr O'Donnell, parish Priest of Kildimo and Pallaskenry, Fr McConville went to see the estate known as Copsewood near Pallaskenry. It was a property containing 150 statute acres of land and a well built house, and appeared very suitable for an Agricultural College. The Bishop gave his approval and the necessary permission from the Superiors in Turin was obtained.<sup>13</sup>

It is obvious that the centre stage is taken in this account by Fr McConville and Fr Sutherland hardly seems to make an appearance.<sup>14</sup>

With the election of the *Dail* and its Declaration of Independence the death knell must have seemed to be sounding for the Anglo-Irish landowners, whose often unoccupied grand houses were soon to become the obvious targets for widespread rural agitation and the activities of the *Dail's* Land Commission.<sup>15</sup>

According to Fr Sutherland the preparatory articles were signed for the

<sup>13</sup> SDB Archives Pallaskenry, Co. Limerick, Dublin, Ireland. *Chronicle of the House of Pallaskenry*. The chronicle of Copsewood College as it was called along with the Minutes of the House Council Meetings represents one of the best kept records in the old Anglo-Irish Province rivalled only by the chronicle of Battersea. It would appear that both of these documents owe their existence to the care of Fr John McCourt who entered the Salesians at Battersea and worked in the Sacred Heart Primary School as a pupil teacher (see Log Book Sept. 23, 1893) and won a scholarship to the Training college at Hammersmith. He received the Cassock on Dec. 8th, 1892 and made his first Profession on Dec. 8th, 1893 (See Battersea Chronicle) He succeeded Fr Bonavia as Prefect of Studies at Battersea and then in 1922, succeeded Fr Sutherland at Limerick. He became the first Rector at Bolton in 1926 and died in Limerick in 1936.

<sup>14</sup> Fr Sutherland according to this Chronicle was appointed as Rector of Farnborough on 29th September 1922 and replaced by Fr McCourt who served as Rector until July 20th, 1926 when he was appointed as the new Rector at Bolton and Fr McConville took his place at Pallaskenry. The predominance of Fr McConville in the account of the origins without a mention of Fr Sutherland's role suggests it was not compiled during his period as Rector and on the 3rd March 1926 it is recorded that *the new building commenced... to-day*.

<sup>15</sup> F.S.L. Lyons. *Ireland since the Famine* (Glasgow, 1973), p. 407-8.

purchase in 1918 with Sir Vincent Nash who was the agent for Captain Caufield, the owner of the property<sup>16</sup> — no doubt happy to get a reasonable price before either the republican Land Commissioners arrived or the mob burned down the Mansion. Fr Sutherland, then, managed to get three months leave from his official post as Military Chaplain at Farnborough and went to Italy to be welcomed by the Superiors and clinch the deal. He acknowledged that he had acted somewhat independently but excused himself as follows:

It may seem strange to you that so far Don Scaloni has not appeared in the picture. The reason is he returned to Belgium in 1914 on the outbreak of war and was interned in Liège by the Germans till 1919 (sic). As soon as he returned to England, I got him to come to see the property at Copsewood and introduced him to the Bishop of Limerick. He was very pleased with everything and told me to go ahead... At last after my demobilization from the army in 1919, I crossed to Ireland to sign the deed of purchase — I put the following names for the owners — Frs Brownrigg, Devine, C. Grey and G. Grey and myself. You will see how it was suggested, by my letter that Fr Franco and Fr Scaloni wanted four Italian names, they had no trust in anyone except an Italian — I must say here that my brother Mr. J.J. Sutherland arranged many things while I was in Italy. It should be remembered that going to Ireland in 1917 and 1918 was not the same as going in 1923. [Presumably because of the menace of German U-Boats as well as the disturbed state of the country.] This was the first time that Salesians were crossing to Ireland and all responsibility and direction devolved on me by direct orders from Don Albera and Don Ricaldone, in the absence of Don Scaloni and as you can understand, I was greatly indebted to my brother and friends for their support.

Fr Macey was in charge while Don Scaloni was interned but he told me to do the best I could, as he could not help me in any way especially as he, himself was preparing to go to Chertsey and he gave me his blessing on leaving England...<sup>17</sup>

Although Fr Sutherland undoubtedly tended to be pleading his own case in his memoirs he made the case that he had acted, if not with explicit permission, at least with some form of generalised consent, at least retrospectively. Such action though, did cause Fr Scaloni some reasonable worry, since he hoped to promote a wider general development and spiritual renewal in the Province, quite apart from the great financial burdens that Fr Sutherland had undertaken. At the same time. The hazards of the enterprise he had undertaken are certainly not to be underestimated.

<sup>16</sup> SDB Archives Dublin. F.S.M., p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

What seems evident is that the other force for change in the Province, namely the renewed Italian presence, was resented by those like Fr Sutherland who unlikely as it might seem, represented the 'Battersea Tradition'. Partly, perhaps, because he would probably have been the natural successor to Fr Macey, he was to resent the clean sweep of the new Italian broom.

### **Fr Scaloni's return**

Shortly after his return from Belgium, Fr Scaloni made a set of nominations for the new Rectors for the Province, which he submitted to Turin in December 1919 for final approval.

No changes in the nominations of the new English Rectors.

London, Battersea: Fr Charles Buss,

St. Mary Magdalen's: Fr Michael de Bary,

The Polish Mission: Fr John Symior,

Burwash: Fr Angelo Franco,

Chertsey: Fr Charles Macey,

Farnborough: Fr John McCourt,

Limerick: Fr Aloysius Sutherland,

Cape of Good Hope: ...?

They are all already in place and the nominations made a good impression, except on some who were expecting their 'stripes'. Fr Macey seems content.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> ACS S.33.22 Inghilterra. Scaloni - Gusmano (18th Dec. 1919): "Nulla di cambiato nelle nomine dei nuovi direttori inglesi, Londra, Battersea: Sac. Buss Carlo; S.M. Maddalene: Sac. De Bary Michele; Missione Polacco\*: Sac. Symior Giov.; Burwash: Sac. Franco Angelo; Chertsey: Sac. Macey Carlo; Farnborough: Sac. McCourt Giov.; Limerick: Sac. Sutherland Luigi; Capo di Buona Speranza...? Sono già tutti a posto e le nomine fecero buona impressione, eccetto in alcuni che si aspettavono i galloni. D. Macey sembra contento." \*London - The Polish Mission: St. Joseph and St. Casimir., 2, Devonshire St. Islington, London.

It was founded in 1904 and had a rather precarious existence up till the second world war. It was founded to serve the needs of Polish exiles who had come to England either for political or economic reasons. Cardinal Bourne persuaded the Salesians to send some Polish confrères to look after the Church which belonged to the Archdiocese of Westminster. The property was rented at L.20 a year. According to Fr Virion in 1909 the average collection was only L.2 a week and attendance was very irregular. He reported that there were about 200 families attached to the Mission but in the last two years they had dwindled greatly... There were also divisions between Lithuanians and Poles. Originally there were two priests but by 1909 there was only Fr Symior who eventually returned to Poland. (He died 14.12.1953 at the age of 80). Fr Virion was the only Major Superior to visit it and it never featured in the mainstream of the English Salesians' work.

In that very brief communication Fr Scaloni indicated the new direction which he hoped that the Province would take over the next few years. The removal of Fr Macey to Chertsey, which had been threatened in 1909, was finally accomplished, even if only on Fr Macey's terms. Fr Macey retired with Fr J. Flower and a small community to set up a small boarding school at Highfield House, Chertsey. This had previously been *The Highfield Middle Class Boys School* owned by Dr. Tranter. Highfield was a pleasant large Victorian house in spacious grounds not far from Eastworth House, where the Salesian Sisters had their Convent and school and where the Salesians were later to build the beautiful new parish Church of Saint Anne's. The original chaplaincy to the Sisters and tiny parish developed with the advent of Fr Macey into a regular house with a boarding school for boys. Fr Macey remained at Chertsey until his death in 1928, a shadow of his former self, yet still occasionally playing something of the monarch in exile.

### Fr Angelo Franco

A new name which appeared on the list of Rectors and indicated this wind of change was that of Fr Angelo Franco. He was born on December 11th, 1885, at Cantavenna, a small hillside village in the Monferrato district of Piedmont, overlooking the river Po. He came from a family of smallholders who farmed their own vineyards with the help of one hired hand. In October 1897 he began his secondary studies as a boarder in the Salesian College at Borgo San Martino, a small market town near Alessandria, where he decided to join the Salesians. He began his Novitiate at Foglizzo in 1901, where he completed his secondary studies and made his first vows. In 1902 he was sent to Rome to commence his studies for the priesthood at the Gregorian University, where he took his degree in Philosophy in 1905. He was then, sent to the United States to complete a period of Practical Training, teaching philosophy to other Salesian students at Troy. After that, he began his Theological Studies at Hawthorne, before returning to Italy in 1910 where he was ordained in Turin on 29th June, 1911. During this time he became a part-time secretary to Fr Albera, the Superior General, while studying at the University of Turin, where he took his Doctorate in Theology on the 4th July 1912.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Sig. Dott. Giuseppe Franco, *Appunti sulla vita di Don Angelo Franco*. This manuscript was kindly lent me by the Franco family, c/o Signa. M. Rubini, Viale Poma, 10, Pavia 27100, Italy.

Also: "*Sacerdos Angelus Franco a Cantavenna, salesianae Congregationis, ut sacrae theologiae doctor renuntiaretur, Augustae Taurinorum in academia pontificio jure, in aedibus Seminarii constituta publice disputabat die IV Julii MCMXII hora XVI cum semisse*" (Torino, 1912). This pamphlet was kept by the family in the house at Cantavenna in the family Archive.

The theses he was examined on in his final examinations were on Old Testament, Hermeneutics, Fundamental Theology, on the Divine Grace of Christ and on the Theological Virtues. He had to defend his theses in public disputation and a commemorative booklet was published to mark the event. As a result of his studies, Fr Franco was probably the best prepared and educated Salesian ever to come to the Province to work and he represented a new style and approach to Salesian life. He put a very high emphasis on theological and educational preparation of the students for the Society, rather than relying very much on traditional practice and rules of thumb, as had been the case under Fr Macey. As Rector at Burwash, he had the chance to observe at first hand, the rather haphazard system of Novitiate and philosophical training which was the current practice and his constant endeavour, throughout his time in England, was to improve the quality and length of the preparation the young Salesians received.

Apart from his academic training, no doubt, his experience of working with Don Albera, the Superior General, gave him added insight and concern for the international dimension of the Society and a deep concern too for the original spirit of the founder. In his own writings, he displayed a desire to make known the lives of the great Salesians he had known and loved like Don Rua and Don Albera.<sup>20</sup>

Another important part of his experience was the time he spent as a conscript medical orderly in the *Sanità*, during the first World War. He was stationed at Fossano and the only evidence we have of his experience is the medical forms on which he wrote his sermon notes during this period. The experience of working with the wounded and dying Italian soldiers certainly profoundly affected one of his contemporaries, Angelo Roncalli, later Pope John XXIII:

Besides the brutality and wretchedness some of us endured, it is fair to dwell upon the consoling episodes that gave lie to our pessimism. Oh the long vigils among the bunks of our dear and brave soldiers spent in hearing their confessions and preparing them to receive the bread of the strong in the morning... How many times did we lean over our dying younger brothers and listen to the anguished breathing of the nation expressed in their suffering and agony. It is impossible to say what a priest's heart felt like in such moments. It often happened that I had to fall on my knees and cry like a child, alone in my room, unable to contain the emotion that I felt at the simple and holy deaths of so many poor sons of our people.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Rev. ANGELO FRANCO, *A Lamp Resplendent*, Paterson, New Jersey 1958.  
*Life of the Ven. Michael Rua*  
*For the sake of their words.*

These works were published in the USA by the Salesian Press.

<sup>21</sup> P. HEBBLETHWAITE, *Pope John XXIII, Pope of the Council*, London, 1985, p. 83-84.

The First World war had the unintended effect of breaking down the almost impenetrable barriers of training and experience which had separated Italian priests from many ordinary people. As so many of the clergy were called up to serve not as chaplains, but as medical orderlies, in a war that turned out to be little short of disastrous, there grew up a degree of common interest, unknown in Italy since before the *Risorgimento*. This experience may well have contributed to an openness of mind not characteristic of the clerical training of the period.

Among the earliest witness to Fr Franco's freshness of approach and depth of learning is a sermon he wrote for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, sometime before 1919, on the Dishonest Steward

who defrauded his master but prepared himself a place for the future (Luke 16:1-8).

In this sermon he developed a very modern sounding exegesis of the text by concentrating on the *crux interpretum* "the children of this age are wiser in their own generation than the children of the light." He rooted his interpretation in the context of Jesus' own ministry.

As well as his apostles, Jesus included among his hearers a great number of publicans and sinners, who were attracted by his kindness [*bontà* a key word for Salesians in that it described the style of relationship Don Bosco believed would move young people to change]. To defend his conduct in dealing so gently with penitent sinners, he told those who contradicted him three parables, the lost sheep, the drachma that was found, and that of the Prodigal Son.<sup>22</sup>

In this context, Fr Franco concluded, the praise for the dishonest steward's ingenuity makes some sense; surely the Pharisees would do well to learn to be more forgiving, like the dishonest steward, so that they, like him, would have someone to receive them into the tents of eternity. The dishonest steward's willingness to let people off their debts is held up for an example to those who considered themselves the children of the light.

This interpretation showed a degree of originality or familiarity with modern biblical criticism which was far from common among Catholics in the post-Modernist period. When later during Fr Franco's period as Rector of the Theological Students at Blaisdon, one of the students complained

<sup>22</sup> A. FRANCO, *VIII Post Pentecostem*, unpublished sermon notes discovered in the family home at Cantavenna, written on the back of Hospital Forms: "Oltre negli apostoli, Gesù contava sempre nell'uditorio un gran numero di pubblicani e di peccatori che erano attratti della sua bontà... numerosi scribi e farisei che mormoravano contro la sua cordiale accoglienza fatta ai rifiutati della società giudaica... Per difendere la sua condotta nel trattando così gentilmente i peccatori penitenti narrò di suoi contraddittori tre parabole: quella della pecorella smarrita, quella della drachma ritrovata, quella del figliolo prodigo."



to Fr Tozzi, that Fr Franco used Protestant biblical commentaries, his only reply was, "They are the best". Given that modern Catholic biblical scholars like J.M. Lagrange only managed to publish his commentary on Luke in 1921, Fr Franco's openness of mind can be understood as remarkable.

Fr Franco was soon writing to Fr Albera from Burwash, where he had been appointed Rector at the early age of 35, to report on the state of house.

They [the novices] come here with heads full of prejudice against the life of the Novitiate and against the Italians. In the first months we have shown them and watched over them with much indulgence and compassion in order to gain their confidence. And here, very dear Fr Albera, permit me to make a proposal: Why not consider even now, preparing the better of our clerics abroad [presumably in Italy], so that one day when they are priests they can take our places in the formation of personnel.

This seems to us one of the most urgent problems, whose solution requires, therefore, immediate attention: **HOW TO FORM STAFF FOR THE NOVITIATE HOUSE AND STUDENTATE** — We do not see any other solution than this, that one or two of the better clerics should be sent to Rome each year to complete their philosophical studies, so that besides acquiring a serious ecclesiastical culture, they may also gain a practical knowledge of the language, of Salesian life and of the Superiors etc. — and then return to the house of studies for their practical training and this would be a great advantage for the teaching of science and philosophy for which we have no one capable. They could, then, communicate to their fellow countrymen that Salesian Spirit, which certainly, given the fervour of their first years of religious life, they could not fail to learn during their stay in Italy.

I do not believe that there would be serious opposition to this initiative: while the English look with little good will at the coming of Italians to England, they would be flattered to see how the Superiors are willing to put English Salesians into positions, with easy of access to higher studies, so as to be able, one day, to take our places in the delicate office of the formation of personnel.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> ACS. S389 Burwash Franco - Albera (3.6.20): "Sono venuti qui colla testa piena di prevenzioni contro la vita del noviziato e contro gli Italiani: nei primi mesi abbiamo dovuto usare con loro molta indulgenza e compatimento, per poterli cattivare la confidenza [...]. E qui permetta veneratissimo Sig. Don Albera, una proposta: Perché non pensare fin da adesso a preparare alla lontana i migliori dei nostri chierici affinché un giorno possano — quando sacerdoti — prendere il nostro posto nella formazione del personale? Questo a noi sembra uno dei *problemi più urgenti* la cui soluzione richiede quindi immediata attenzione 'come formare il personale della casa di noviziato e studentato'. Noi non vediamo altra soluzione che questa: si mandino ogni anno uno o due dei migliori chierici in Italia a compire in Roma i loro studi filosofici, affinché oltre ad una seria cultura ecclesiastica acquistino una conoscenza pratica della lingua, della vita Salesiana, dei Superiori etc. ritornando nella casa di studentato per tirocinio pratico oltrechè essere di grande vantaggio per la scuola di scienze e di filosofia (per



This proposal showed a solid grasp of the English feeling about the Italian Salesians in England and also an imaginative effort to overcome some of the difficulties. While, perhaps, there are elements of 'paternalism' in his attitude, Fr Franco seemed to be able to believe, unlike some of the Italians that the English could, with suitable training and education, become good Salesians.

He also asked for a musician to break the monotony of Burwash, which the English Salesians called the 'tomb of the province'. He then, went on to express his hope for the success of the new house of studies at Oxford:

We pray the Virgin Help of Christians and Venerable Don Bosco that we will be able to see the new house of at Oxford flourish and transform itself into a Missionary Seminary for India in the not too distant future.<sup>24</sup>

Fr Scaloni had to make the case for buying the Student house at Oxford from the Capuchins to the Economer General.

From the letter attached from Fr Franco, you can see that Burwash is insufficient for our needs due to lack of space. Moreover the lack of land and the refusal of the proprietor to sell, puts us in the impossibility of providing for our students. The letter indicates the precarious state of the building. Burwash is not a treasure but a worn out garment, so tight and short that it can no longer be worn...

Coming to Oxford, I will only add a few reflections to complete the first report.<sup>25</sup>

Fr Scaloni, then, went on to explain how he hoped to raise the money, £.7000, to cover the purchase price and something for the changes that

cui ora abbiamo assolutamente nessun insegnante capace) potranno comunicare ai loro compatrioti quello spirito Salesiano che certamente — dato il fervore dei primi anni di vita religiosa — non mancheranno di apprendere nella loro dimora in Italia. I Salesiani Inglesi, non credo che farebbero seria opposizione a questa iniziativa: essi che vedono poco volentieri l'invio di Italiani in Inghilterra, sarebbero forse lusingati nel vedere come i superiori intendono di mettere in grado i Salesiani Inglesi — col dare loro comodità di frequentare studi superiori — di potere prendere un giorno il nostro posto in uffici delicati e nella formazione del personale."

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.: "Pregheremo la Vergine Ausil. ed il Ven. D. Bosco affinché Le sia concesso di vedere fiorire la nuova casa di studi di Oxford — e se il Signore ci benedirà come noi speriamo — di vederla trasformarsi nel *Seminario delle Missioni* per l'India, in un non lontano avvenire."

<sup>25</sup> ACS. S31.22 Inghilterra. Scaloni - Conelli (Economo Generale) (12.2.1920): "Dalla lettera qui unita di D. Franco, si vede che Burwash è insufficiente ai nostri bisogni per mancanza di spazio. Di più, la mancanza di terreno nostro ed il rifiuto di vendere, da parte del proprietario, ci mette nell'impossibilità di provvedere — la stessa lettera indica lo stato precario del nostro fabbricato [...]. Burwash non è un tesoro, ma un abito logoro, stretto e corto da non potersi più usare [...]. Venendo ora ad Oxford, aggiungerò solo alcuni riflessi per completare la mia prima relazione."

needed to be made, like toilet accommodation. He hoped to borrow the money for about ten or fifteen years, and he had the agreement of the Rectors to increase the Provincial funds by £.600 or £.700 a year and believed it would be possible to invest this to some advantage in Italian, French, and Belgian government bonds. He also assured the Economist General that it was well worth taking on these extra burdens for the sake of the advantages which Oxford offered over Burwash, namely the ease of access, the beauty of the site, the comfort of the house, the space for games, the facilities for taking academic degrees, as much for ourselves as for confrères from other provinces, and for the lustre which will shine on the Salesian name in the hearts of the English.

Then, perhaps, to persuade the doubters in the Superior Chapter, he wrote:

It should not be thought at Turin that the University of Oxford is like that which is deplored with regard to all Universities. The 4000 students at Oxford are what they are internally but externally they have to deal with the puritan Protestant English and the faculty with its iron discipline is no laughing matter.<sup>26</sup>

The fact that Fr Scaloni claimed to be acting with the agreement of the Rectors and in other correspondence says the council have decided, implies a very different style of government than that which had been criticised by Fr Virion during his Visitation in 1908. Unlike Fr Macey, Fr Scaloni had the reputation of governing the Province by the consent of the Rectors and was prepared also to be overruled by the Provincial Counsellors on occasion.

At this stage Fr Scaloni had begun to receive demands for English Salesians to go abroad to India, Malta and of course, South Africa. While he felt unable to meet most of these demands, he was able to report that he intended to admit 20 novices for September 1920, and thus began the most amazing period of post-war growth. In September he reported:

In a little while, the clerics from Burwash will betake themselves with all their directors and teachers to Oxford. The Council have decided not to abandon Burwash i.e. the little parish, because the bishop has no one to put in our place and our hasty departure would make a very bad impression.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.: "...Non si creda a Torino che l'ambiente universitario di Oxford somigli a quello che si deplora all'interno di tutte le Università. I 4.000 studenti di Oxford sono internamente quel che sono, ma esternamente hanno da contare sul puritanesimo protestante inglese, e la Facoltà, con la sua disciplina di ferro, non ischerza."

<sup>27</sup> ACS. S31.22 Scaloni - Ven. Padre (22nd Sept. 1920): "Tra poco, i chierici di Burwash si reheranno, con tutto il personale dirigente ed insegnante, ad Oxford. Il consiglio si decise

He then went on to suggest that it might become a small preparatory school for boys between the ages of eight and twelve, with Fr Tierney as Rector.

Fr Franco wrote to Fr Gusmano on Christmas Eve to explain the delay in their move.

I was not able to write before this, having been in London these last few days in order to settle our transfer — with how much difficulty! What a bother it has been for Fr Provincial! The banks have spun out the business of borrowing the necessary amount, without which the good Capuchins did not think it right to give us possession of the property and for a fortnight while everything was ready, there came from the Bank an important document which required the signature of Fr Sutherland, it had to be sent to Ireland and has not yet been returned. At any rate everything is prepared for leaving in the first week of January.<sup>28</sup>

Fr Franco then, put in a bid for some help, such as the United States Province had received, in the form of some Italian clerics prepared to consecrate themselves to the work of formation of future Salesians.

In this regard, we have houses full of aspirants, but who looks after them? They come to the novitiate unprepared in every way, after having already seen the miseries of Salesian life (in England, you understand)... If instead there were trained personnel that could assist these aspirants, who would work with them and select from among them...<sup>29</sup>

Already Fr Franco seemed to be planning a preparatory training period for aspirants before they would go to the novitiate.

The fruit of this appeal was that Fr Joseph Ciantar, a great Maltese Salesian, whose nomination as Rector of St. Patrick's had just been refused by the Colonial Administration, because he was not British, came to England and worked with Fr Franco in spreading the Salesian name in

di non abbandonare Burwash [...] cioè la piccola parrocchia [...] Il vescovo non avendo nessuno per prendere la nostra successione, la nostra partenza avrebbe fatto troppa cattiva impressione."

<sup>28</sup> ACS. S389 Burwash. Franco - Gusmano (24 Dec. 1920): "Non potei scriverle prima essendo stato in questi giorni a Londra per combinare il nostro trasloco. Quante difficoltà! Quanti fastidi pel Sig. Ispettore! Le Banche hanno tirato le cose in lungo per imprestarci la somma necessaria senza la quale i buoni PP. Cappuccini non credono bene darci il possesso della proprietà; e quindici giorni or sono quando tutto era pronto per parte delle Banche un importante documento che richiedeva la firma di P. Sutherland viene spedito in Irlanda e... non è ancora di ritorno [...] Ad ogni modo tutto è predisposto per la partenza nella 1<sup>a</sup> settimana di Gennaio."

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.: "Abbiamo case piene di aspiranti... ma chi si cura di loro? Vengono al noviziato impreparati sotto ogni riguardo, dopo aver già conosciuto le miserie della vita Salesiana (inglese si capisce). Se invece ci fosse personale adatto che potesse attendere a questi aspiranti e fare una opera di selezione tra di essi..."

parishes all over the U.K. and Northern Ireland. Thereby drawing in many prospective young Salesians. According to Fr Franco's later dictum, "He got the bacon, and I cured it."

In the aftermath of the First World War, there was a rapid increase in the number of candidates proposing to join the Salesians. The presence and influence of Frs Franco and Ciantar meant that the Salesians were ready and adaptable enough to cater for this increase. They presented a degree of personal enthusiasm and deep faith which captured the hearts of many of the young men who joined the society under their inspiration. They offered a Salesian Missionary ideal which began to inspire the Province quite deeply, as well as an attractive and very vivacious style of personal relationships, which they attributed to the charisma of St. John Bosco.

### **The second foundation in Ireland**

Another new addition to the Province, by way of Malta, was Fr Patrick O'Grady. He had been one of the first young Irishmen to go out to Turin in 1882 with Francis Donnellan. His subsequent career as a Salesian had taken him from Italy to Argentina, then to the Falkland Islands Mission and finally to be the First Rector at St Patrick's Technical School, Sliema, Malta.

Late in 1920 Fr Scaloni wrote to thank Don Albera for sending Fr O'Grady and to explain what he hoped he would do.

Just a few lines to thank you for the arrival of Fr O'Grady in England and to excuse and explain my telegram. Fr O'Grady wrote to me to tell me that it was being discussed where he should go and the matter was urgent and he suggested that I send a telegram. Two houses find themselves in such a deplorable state with regard to staff: Limerick and Battersea.

At Limerick there are about 100 boarders made up of students of agriculture and 'Sons of Mary' (adult prospective vocations) with only five confrères.

I would like to add, confidentially, that I have little confidence in Fr Sutherland. He was the only one capable of founding and organising this house, but I know that he lacks Salesian formation. Don O'Grady has his defects but from the outset he knew Don Bosco, he is liked and could be a double benefit, that of relieving Fr Sutherland of the administration as Prefect, (he could succeed him as Rector in two years if the Superiors judged it right) and that of infusing a little Salesian Spirit and of love for the Congregation.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> ASC. S31.22 Inghilterra. Scaloni - Ven. Padre (10.11.1920): "Due righe per ringraziare dell'arrivo di don O'Grady in Inghilterra per scusare e spiegare il mio telegramma. Don O'Grady mi scrisse che si stava deliberando sulla sua destinazione, che vi era urgenza e mi

But Fr Sutherland was enough of a tactician not to be manoeuvred out of his chosen post so easily. He soon dispatched Fr O'Grady to the Gresham Hotel in Dublin where, in not inconsiderable comfort, he could look after the interests of the Salesians in an important inheritance case which was going through the Irish courts. Fr O'Grady wrote to Fr Albera from Dublin:

I find myself here for several days, in charge of the settlement of the provisions of the will of our benefactress, Mrs Lynch, who has left us a conspicuous inheritance, but it is a business that requires time and litigation. One of the executors, a lawyer does not accept the form of the pious work we are offering, that is an agricultural school, as corresponding to the will. This difficult business must be dealt with before a Judicial court. We hope to win the case.<sup>31</sup>

The inheritance that Fr O'Grady referred to was a considerable property in Co. Meath called Warrenstown, which Fr Sutherland hoped would provide the second Irish foundation.

Fr Sutherland's account of the arrival of Fr O'Grady as Prefect shows his grasp of the situation in Ireland, and at the same time, the threat he felt from this representative of another generation.

Now another atmosphere was created by the arrival of Fr O'Grady as Prefect. We gave him a most cordial welcome but being nearly thirty years older than myself and knowing many people in Turin and speaking Italian like a Italian and having seen Don Bosco, he was not a humble man, but felt superior to everybody and certainly did not spare me. Apart from the fact that he had been partly educated in Italy and South America, he was by no means educated to the standard we have arrived at over here and was practically useless for teaching the upper form boys. But he was very shrewd and used all his tactics to have me removed...

As a Prefect he was useless and I found, to my cost, a danger — Until

suggeri di spedire un dispaccio, facendomi [...]. Due case si trovano in uno stato veramente deplorabile in fatto di personale; Limerick e Battersea. A Limerick, vi sono un centinaio di stud. interni, compresi stud. agricoli e figli di Maria, con soli 5 confratelli [...]. Le dirò anche confidenzialmente che ho poca fiducia in Don Sutherland. Egli era il solo capace di fondare e di organizzare questa Casa, ma so che manca di formazione salesiana... Don O'Grady avrà i suoi difetti, ma è dell'antico tempo, conobbe Don Bosco, gli è affezionato e potrà fare un doppio bene: quello di sollevare Don Sutherland nell'amministrazione come prefetto, (potrebbe anche succedergli come direttore, tra due anni, se i superiori giudicassero bene) e quello d'informare un po' di spirito Salesiano e di amore alla congregazione."

<sup>31</sup> ACS. S31.22 Inghilterra. O'Grady - Albera (30.12.1920): "Mi trovo qui per qualche giorno incaricato del aggiustamento delle disposizioni testamentarie della nostra benefattrice Sig.a Lynch, la quale ci ha lasciato una eredità cospicua ma è un affare che richiede tempo e litigazione. Uno degli esecutori, un avvocato, non accetta la forma di opera pia che noi siamo per intraprendere, cioè scuola agricola, come corrispondente al Testamento."

his coming, we had to be very frugal, as you can understand. Now everything I had done was wrong and accordingly the expenses were trebled. He acted as Prefect as if Copsewood was an old established house with a fixed income. He did not realize that the College was not opened hardly two years and we had lived so far on a loan and were waiting on things to improve, when hostilities ceased. To a happy community he brought disunion. As I had too much to do, with Warrenstown on my hands, I again suggested that Fr O'Grady should go to Dublin and carry on the negotiations with the solicitors and I would try to pay his expenses. In that way we got rid of him, even if in a costly way — but he still had not a good word for Pallaskenry and was angry that I had been sent to start the Salesian work.<sup>32</sup>

Frs Sutherland and O'Grady were not only divided by age, ambition and education but also by their political loyalties, which at this time were significantly strained, as Sutherland suggested:

He attacked me for being on the wrong side in the Irish struggle for Independence and said the Sinn Feiners had no chance of winning and wrote in that strain to Italy and to Don Scaloni and, in fact, told them with his friend, Fr Brownrigg, supporting him and I imagine Fr Leaver also, that we were all in danger of having the house blown up by the Black and Tans.<sup>33</sup>

Conditions in Ireland at his period were very disturbed indeed, and no doubt, this explains Fr Sutherland's fears, particularly, since he did not restrict his activities to a mere political sympathy but was also quite prepared to hide 'wanted men on the run' like General Hannigan and Fr McCarthy.

The Warrenstown foundation came to the Salesians as a result of a rather complicated legal process, which was probably facilitated by Fr Sutherland's brother. According to the College Prospectus for 1929:

The Warrenstown Agricultural College, Co. Meath, owes its origins to the munificence of the late Mrs. Elizabeth M. Lynch who died in September 1917, in Italy, near Genoa. She spent the last 33 years of her life in the practice of charitable works (amongst which, was the establishment of a lace factory, giving employment). By her will, she left her share in Warrenstown House and estate (five hundred acres of prime land) to Rev. Mother Morrrough Bernard, Superioress of the Sisters of Charity, Foxford, Co. Mayo, on condition that she founded at Foxford, viz. technical woolen mills for the benefit of the locality. The Rev. Mother Bernard declined to accept the conditions of the bequest and accordingly under the terms of the will the property was to be handed

<sup>32</sup> SDB Archives Dublin F.S.M., p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.



over to the Salesian Fathers for the maintenance of an industrial foundation to be established at or near Warrenstown.<sup>34</sup>

Fr Scaloni explained why the Salesians needed to go to Court over the will to the Superior General. She had left half the house to the Salesians, the rest going to a niece but she had also left the Salesians all the land, 240 hectares and a sum of £.6,000 or £.7,000, a very considerable inheritance indeed. He summed up the situation thus:

The Bishop wants us, as does the Parish priest, a most influential person, but the factotum of the executors of the will does not recognise our professional schools of agriculture and arts and trades as corresponding to the will of the deceased.

Influential and competent friends pushed Fr Sutherland and Fr O'Grady to demand a legal decision of the Dublin court assuring them of the victory.

The Provincial Council, taking into consideration the importance of the inheritance, considering that it is not a true trial and that public opinion is against the opposing party and that finally, the steps already taken by Fr Sutherland, without previously consulting the Provincial, are already well advanced, the Council is of the opinion that we should proceed to litigation.<sup>35</sup>

In the following August he announced that:

The Dublin court has pronounced its judgement in favour of the Salesians and recognises our project for an agricultural school as corresponding to the will of the testator.<sup>36</sup>

From Fr Scaloni's laconic account, Fr Sutherland's determination not to miss this huge prize legacy (estimated to be worth between £.20,000 - £.30,000 sterling, with a liquid sum of £.7,000 on top) had won the day,

<sup>34</sup> ACS. S.38 Warrenstown. Prospectus 1929.

<sup>35</sup> ACS. S.38 Warrenstown. Scaloni - Albera (11 April 1921): "...il Vescovo ci desidera, come pure il parroco del luogo, persona molto influente, ma il factotum degli esecutori testamentari non riconosce le nostre Scuole professionali di agricoltura, di arti e mestieri come rispondenti alla volontà della testatrice [...] Amici influenti e competenti in materia spinsero Don Sutherland e Don O'Grady a provocare una decisione legale della Corte di Dublino, assicurando come certa la vittoria. Il Consiglio Ispettorale, considerando l'importanza della cosa, considerando che non si tratta di vero processo e che l'opinione pubblica è contro la parte avversa, considerando infine, che i passi già fatti da Don Sutherland senza consultare preventivamente l'Ispettore sono già molto avanzati, è già fatti da Don Sutherland senza consultare preventivamente l'Ispettore sono già molto avanzati, è di parere che si proceda e si vada al fondo del litigio."

<sup>36</sup> ACS. S.38 Warrenstown. Scaloni - Albera (7 Aug. 1921): "La corte di Dublino ha pronunziato il suo giudizio in favore dei Salesiani, riconoscendo il nostro progetto di scuole agricole e professionali come rispondente alla volontà della testatrice..."



even though it was against the Salesian tradition to go to court over inheritance disputes. There was one difficult provision of the will, however, namely that the institute had to be functioning within seven years of the testator's decease i.e. 1924.

Apart from the civil wrangle there was also an ecclesiastical wrangle to be sorted out. The Bishop of Meath expressed himself willing to accept the Salesians into the diocese under three conditions:

1. that an agricultural college be established at Warrenstown.
2. It is not to have a college for secondary education, nor a chapel open to the public.
3. That the Salesian Fathers will always be subject to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Meath.

I deem it advisable to place these matters before the Superior General, in the hope that by so doing, all friction in the future will be avoided.<sup>37</sup>

Fr Scaloni warned the Superior General that:

The Irish bishops, if they are not real 'fathers', as is the Bishop of Limerick, they consider themselves as *Padroni* of the persons and property of their dioceses. He [The Bishop of Meath] is a learned, wise and just. He seems to esteem us, but he does not intend to have any dealings with us, and he has repeatedly said this, unless the Superior General sends him the required document.<sup>38</sup>

The death of Fr Albera in 1921 and the need to hold a General Chapter of the whole Society to elect a successor, meant that the required document was not ready till 20th October 1922.

The document acknowledged most of the bishops conditions.

Saving the canons of the Codex, the Salesian Fathers will recognise always the jurisdiction of the Bishop of the diocese. Wherever they may, they will always do their best to acquiesce in his least desires, that are reconcilable with the duty they owe to their own Congregation.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> ACS. S.38 Warrenstown. Bp. of Meath - Scaloni (6 Dec. 1920).

<sup>38</sup> ACS. S.38 Warrenstown. Scaloni - Albera (7 Aug. 1921): "I Vescovi Irlandesi, se non sono veri padri come quello di Limerick, si considerano come padroni delle persone e delle cose della loro diocesi. Egli è un Vescovo dotto e giusto, sembra stimare i Salesiani, ma non intende di avere relazioni con essi finché, disse ripetutamente, il Sup. Generale non gli manda il documento richiesto."

<sup>39</sup> ACS. S.38 Warrenstown. Rinaldi - Gaughran (26 Oct. 1922).

In the register Archives of the Diocese of Meath (Cathedral House, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath) there are two entries with regard to Warrenstown (vol. 1, covering the parishes Ardcaith-Dysard, p. 242 entries 10 and 11) which record the *Record by Rev. P. Farrell PP of having blessed Warrenstown Oratory Sept. 29th, 1925* and 11. Guarantees of the Superior General Salesian Fathers re Warrenstown (See Warrenstown compartment). Unfortunately in the reorganisation of the Deeds cupboards in the archive the said compartment has

Still the bishop was not totally satisfied because the Salesians had not explicitly confined themselves to the agricultural school. Ultimately the document was signed, but this did not stop the Salesians at Warrenstown having half a dozen latinists with religious vocations, out of 21 students, by the time of Fr Candela's extraordinary visitation in of the house in 1926.<sup>40</sup>

### **Sound hopes for the not too distant future**

During this period of early post-war expansion, Fr Scaloni came under increasing pressure from Turin to provide English-speaking personnel for the developing missions in India, Malta and South Africa. He evidently found these requests difficult to respond to because very few of the priests in the Province seemed to be willing to go abroad.

It is much easier to induce young clerics to leave their relatives and country than our priests, trained in the old system. They do not want to know about Cape Town, Malta or India.

One answered recently that if he was obliged to go, he would ask to be released from his vows, and he is one of those who received the best formation at Foglizzo.<sup>41</sup>

But Fr Scaloni was far from losing hope,

In these last two years, many abuses have been done away with, many confrères are beginning to have a higher idea of the Congregation and a new generation is being formed — there are thirty novices this year and we are hoping for more in the year to come, and thus, we can rightly have the best of hopes for the not too distant future.<sup>42</sup>

Fr Scaloni's suggestion was that the Superiors should send some of the best elements in Italy to replace those who would go to the mission, so that the good work that was being begun in England would not be wasted.

disappeared and of the documents themselves, I could find no trace. According to the Archivist, the lack of any correspondence about Warrenstown's foundation may well be attributed to Bishop Gaughran's reputation for having burnt all the diocesan correspondence and the move of the Archive to the new Cathedral premises in 1939.

<sup>40</sup> ACS. S.31.24 Inghilterra. (13) Visite 1926. Don Candela.

<sup>41</sup> ACS. S.31.22 Inghilterra. Scaloni - Gusmano (22 Sept. 1921): "È più facile indurre giovani chierici a lasciare i parenti e la patria che i nostri sacerdoti dell'antica formazione. Non vogliono sapere di Cape Town, di Malta, o dell'India."

<sup>42</sup> ACS. S31.22 Inghilterra. Scaloni - Fascie (16 Nov. 1921), p. 1: "Uno mi rispose persino che se l'avessero obbligato, avrebbe chiesto la dispensa dei voti. Questi è uno che ricevette un'ottima formazione a Foglizzo"; p. 2: "In questi due ultimi anni, molti abusi sono spariti, molti confratelli incominciano ad avere un'idea più alta della Congregazione, ed una nuova generazione si forma — 30 sono gli iscritti dell'anno corrente, e molti se ne sperano per l'anno venturo — e ciò autorizza le più belle speranze per un non lontano avvenire."

These [Salesians from Italy] will also be necessary so that we can open, in a little while, two or three new houses in the North of England, a rich mine of good vocations, of good Co-operators and a field well suited to develop our specific institutions, festive oratories, professional and agricultural schools. As long as we remain in London and its outskirts with colleges similar to those of the diocese and other congregations or lay people, we will continue to vegetate.<sup>43</sup>

These words of Fr Scaloni show a good deal of wisdom, in that they recognised very clearly the areas where there were strong established Catholic communities, probable sources of vocations and lay support [Co-operators]. He also recognised that for real growth, apart from a climate favourable to recruitment, the Salesians needed to be true to their original inspiration, hence, the need to concentrate on its own characteristic works, rather than imitating those of others. He hoped to obtain some further help from Italy to consolidate his planned expansion.

Fr Scaloni's vision was not restricted to England or Belgium, having himself founded the Mission in the Belgian Congo. He also suggested an original solution to the problems of the isolation of the house in Cape Town. He suggested that it should join up with the Missions and houses in the Congo. Since most of the Belgian confrères spoke Flemish, which was closely related to Afrikaans, the common tongue of the non-English South Africans, it could act as a base and recuperation centre for the Belgian confrères who worked there.

### **Foundation in the North of England**

It is clear, then, that Fr Scaloni had it in mind as early as 1921 to make foundations in the North and by 1923, it would appear that himself and Fr McConville had gone north in search of a suitable opening in the Manchester area, which was where one of the early English Salesians, Fr Hawarden originated. In March of 1923, Fr Rabagliati reported to Fr Gusmano that,

Last Thursday, a canon from Manchester came to speak to Fr Provincial in the name of Mgr. Casartelli, the bishop of Salford and Manchester is in his diocese. This canon would have been able to help us

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 4: "Questi buoni elementi italiani ci sarebbero anche necessari per aprire, più tardi, due o tre nuove Case nel Nord dell'Inghilterra, ricca miniera di buone vocazioni, di buoni operatori, e campo adatto a mostrare quali sono le istituzioni nostre specifiche: oratori festivi, scuole professionali, agricole ecc. Fin che noi rimaniamo solo a Londra e nei dintorni, con collegi simili a quelli Vescovili, congreganisti o laici, noi continueremo a vegetare."

if i had known him. But I believe we will easily find what we are looking for through Fr Hawarden.<sup>44</sup>

In fact the Canon proved to be more important than Fr Hawarden in organising the future foundation in Bolton. However, Fr Rabagliati did his best to oil the wheels by making the acquaintance of Bishop Casartelli in Rome during the early months of 1923 and sending him a photograph of Don Bosco. The bishop duly replied and mentioned that he had seen Cardinal Cagliero many times in Rome though he had never spoken to him. He added more significantly,

I hope your Fathers will come, probably next year, to make a foundation in this diocese in the city of Bolton, as you promised me.<sup>45</sup>

Fr Rabagliati sent his letter to the new Superior General, Fr Rinaldi, and advised him that haste was of the utmost importance because the bishop was old and might die at any time and his successor might not be so well disposed.

Some quick decision must have been made because a property in Bolton called Thornleigh, was purchased at the direction of the Bolton Catholic clergy on November 15th, 1923. According to the *Bolton Evening News* Thornleigh had been bought on behalf of the Salesian Society for the establishment of a Catholic secondary school for boys. Canon J.A. Burke was the moving force behind this purchase, having been the Catholic representative on the Bolton Education Committee for many years, and one of Bolton's parish priests. He wished to establish a boys' secondary to complement the work done by the Cross and Passion Sisters at Mount St Joseph's Girls school.

The property was in the hands of the Catholic clergy by the following February and was handed over to the Salesians on May 13th, 1924. Fr Burke was not satisfied at merely providing a bare minimum. He also insisted in buying a nearby house called Hayward Lea for £.800, out of his own pocket and making a gift of it for the school. He also organised a major Garden Party in the grounds in the summer of 1924 to raise funds to start the school and to publicise the undertaking and it was attended by 1000 people. As a result of his sterling efforts, Thornleigh Salesian College

<sup>44</sup> ACS. S.31.22 Rabagliati - Gusmano (13.3.23): "Giovedì scorso, v'era un Canonico di Manchester, che venne per parlare al Sig. Ispettore a nome di Mons. Casartelli che è vescovo di Salford e Manchester è in quella Diocesi. Detto Canonico avrebbe potuto aiutarci se l'avessi saputo. Credo però che troveremo facilmente quelli che desideriamo per mezzo di D. Hawarden."

<sup>45</sup> ACS. S.38 Bolton. Casartelli - Rabagliati (22.7.23): "Spero sempre che i vostri padri verranno forse l'anno prossimo a fare una fondazione in questa diocesi nella città di Bolton come mi fu promesso."

opened its doors in September 1925, as a small day and boarding school for boys. But for the school to become available to many Catholic children, it had to be approved by the Inspectorate of Schools as being efficient and a suitable school to receive pupils on bursaries or scholarships.

When the first school inspection took place in 1927, the inspectors approved of much that they saw but noted some major problems, which were to hamper the development of the Salesians as force in the field of grant maintained education for many years to come.

Numerically the staff is more than adequate. In the quality of scholarship brought to the work, there is something still to be desired, if the school is to develop a satisfactory top. It is suggested that the scholastics should be regarded as supernumerary to establishment and as the numbers increase, additions to the staff should be fully qualified teachers. Apart from any other considerations the fleeting tenure of a scholastic makes it undesirable he should be entrusted with any responsibility for the organisation and teaching of any of the cardinal subjects of the curriculum.<sup>46</sup>

The lack of properly qualified Salesians made the expansion in the sector of grant maintained education an extremely difficult enterprise and Fr Franco's efforts in Oxford could not provide more than a handful of graduates, who indeed did sterling work. But the use of unqualified scholastics as classroom fodder became one of the persistent problems of the development of Salesian schools.

On the other hand the quality of relationship which the presence of young clerics made possible between staff and boys was an important reason for maintaining their presence in the school, a factor recognised by the Inspectors.

The foundation of Thornleigh College marked a new development in the history of the Salesian work in England. For the first time, the work of State Maintained and therefore popular secondary education became available to the Salesians, which was in principle, open to any boy of talent. This development was to become the pattern which was to be followed in the rest of the Province, wherever possible. It confirmed the trend in the Catholic community to attempt to persuade Local Authorities to provide Catholic children with secondary education on the rates, without actually founding Catholic schools. Fr Scaloni's hopes of initiating the characteristic works of the society were only partially realized in that at least, Thornleigh was open to boys from families who could not afford to pay school fees.

<sup>46</sup> SDB. Archives GB. Board of Education, Inspectorate of Schools: *Report on Thornleigh College, Bolton* (London, 1927), p. 5.

**Some sadder moments**

Though a rapid growth and development of the Salesian work seemed to characterise this early post-war period, it was not free from conflict or those sadder moments which affect everything human.

Fr Macey's successor at Battersea as Rector, Fr Charles Buss was not a success. His failing eyesight and his lack of mental balance, noted by Fr Macey at the outbreak of war when he was appointed a chaplain, meant that the office of Rector was too much for him. He was replaced after only three years, the minimum period for such an appointment. His reaction was to demand that he be appointed Parish Priest at Battersea or he would leave the Society. In fact, Bishop Amigo refused to hear of him being appointed, and Fr Buss found himself high and dry.

It was a real shame to send an old man like Fr Macey away after he had started the Province and built up Battersea. It would have brought respect for the Italians if they had let him die in peace in the house he loved. Fr Franco was instrumental in having him removed. As you can realize, the house at Battersea was in a very disturbed state and Fr Scaloni had to leave things in my hands in Limerick, first, because he knew nothing about Limerick, except what Fr Franco told him, which was all... and secondly, because he had more than he could manage at Battersea with Fr Buss and company. Fr Buss's plans were laughable — he was going to staff the house with Italian Salesians from New York, with the real Don Bosco spirit. He impressed Fr Scaloni, at first, until he found that Don Buss was not such a great saint and that everybody was laughing at him, especially Bro. Patrick Brassil, whom he expelled from the Congregation and who came rushing over to Copsewood to be received back. Fr Franco followed Fr Buss: then, there was to be clear out of Battersea in less than two years. Next came Fr McCarthy, who practically imprisoned Fr Scaloni in his room and then Fr Scaloni decided to go to South Africa for a change and was more or less killed there. I think that this is a fair synopsis of an extraordinary situation at Battersea. After the removal of Fr Macey, Fr Franco was going to change the face of the earth, only to make everyone hate the Italians — and the Superiors in Italy still let him carry on his stupid policy.<sup>47</sup>

Fr Sutherland's somewhat impressionistic synopsis indicates, at least, some of the depth of feeling that must have been generated by the sweeping pace of development in these years. Whatever changes were made they were likely to be interpreted as an Italian take-over.

In fact, Fr Scaloni faced increasing pressure from Italy to bring the

<sup>47</sup> SDB. Archives Dublin FSM, p. 8.



English Province into line with current Italian practice, particularly where smoking and the practice of taking Christmas and Easter holidays were concerned. On both of these fronts he had a somewhat uphill struggle.

The practice of school holidays had become practically universal in England with the availability of cheap rail fares. They were introduced at the Bar Convent, York, as early as 1846.<sup>48</sup> Battersea would seem to have conformed to the national practice at least from its organisation as a boarding school. Nonetheless, since this was not common practice in Italy, it was frowned upon as a relaxation of the rule. During 1921, in the interval before the election of Fr Rinaldi as Superior General, Fr Scaloni received a peremptory circular from Fr Fascie, the Superior Councillor in charge of Schools, ordering him to abolish Christmas and Easter holidays forthwith. Fr Scaloni's reply showed his accurate assessment of the English situation and his 'gradualist approach' to problems of discipline, and an unwillingness to accept without protest a more authoritarian style of centralised government which seemed to be developing in Turin.

As to the abolition of Christmas and Easter holidays, you say that I should give precise orders, taking on yourself all the grave consequences which I foresee. Moreover it is my opinion that it would be better to be patient and when we have a few good Rectors, animated by the Salesian Spirit, to try to reduce them progressively; and when our finances are better to try even to abolish them altogether.

As you see, I speak only of what you told me. You may give precise instructions, now that you have full knowledge of the matter and you will see how you will be obeyed. Why, for my part, I do not consider myself to have fallen so low as to need to be given peremptory commands to act when the action depends on me. And here, I cannot hide my bitterness of soul at the thought that a higher authority was able to think this of me and to let me know by means of a young cleric, who will in a short time be under my jurisdiction. Poor thing, what must he think of his Provincial and with what authority can one speak of obedience in his presence?<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> *The History of the Bar Convent, York* (Godalming GU7 1ST, 1987), p. 10.

<sup>49</sup> ACS. S.31.22 Scaloni - Fascie (16 Nov. 1921), p. 8, 9: "Per l'abolizione delle vacanze Natalizie e Pasquali, mi dica se devo dare ordini precisi, prendendo però su di sé le gravi conseguenze che io prevedo. Tuttavia, a me pare che meglio sarebbe pazientare, e, quando avremo alcuni buoni direttori, animati da vero Spirito Salesiano, tentare di ridurle progressivamente; migliorata poi la nostra situazione finanziaria, tentare anche di sopprimerle. Come vede, le dico solo parli, mi dia istruzioni precise, ora che ha piena conoscenza delle cose, e vedrà come sarà ubbidito, perché, da parte mia, non credo di essere disceso così basso d'aver bisogno che mi si diano ordini perentori per agire, quando l'azione dipende da me. E qui non posso nasconderle l'amarezza dell'animo mio al pensiero che un'alta autorità ha potuto crederlo, e farmelo sapere per mezzo di un chierichetto, il quale tra poco sarà sotto la mia giurisdizione. Poveretto! Che deve egli pensare del suo ispettore e con quale autorità questi potrà parlare di ubbidienza d'innanzi a lui?"



Fr Scaloni's protest at the insensitive and authoritarian style of government that Don Fascie was trying to introduce was echoed at the General Chapter of 1922 when it became obvious that the society was working world wide and it had to adapt to local situations, so much so, that the circular was withdrawn.

Fr Scaloni had also to face the very real and painful problems of members of the Society who had decided to leave the religious life and the priesthood without asking for dispensations, thus incurring the canonical penalties of excommunication. To avoid this Fr Scaloni tried to persuade them to change their minds or, where this was impossible, to obtain dispensations for them. One had left to become a Protestant minister, and another had taken a job in Japan and wanted to be laicised but was willing to remain celibate.<sup>50</sup>

At the end of 1925 Fr Ricaldone, the Prefect General, had encouraged Fr Scaloni to take steps to obtain a free passage from the Belgian government to conduct an extraordinary visitation of the Congo, going via Cape Town. He arrived there on January 25th, 1926 and spent a month visiting the houses at Cape Town and Claremont [Lansdowne] (set up by Fr Tozzi as an agricultural school after the First World War). He left Cape Town on March 1st and arrived at the Kiniama Mission in the Belgian Congo where on March 25th he was taken ill and began to run a high temperature. He tried to carry on his visitation but was admitted to hospital in Elizabethville where he died on Monday, April 5th, 1926, having asked the assembled confrères for forgiveness if had unwittingly offended any of them, encouraged them to lay aside any little misunderstandings that might divide them, and to assure the English Province that he felt as much interest and affection for them as he did for the Belgian Province.

The last remark made by Fr Scaloni suggested that he had found his task in England a good deal more difficult than that which he had faced in Belgium, the Province which he himself had practically founded. Yet he left an abiding impression of openness and even-handedness among the English confrères which it was difficult for them to forget. His willingness to learn English, to accept football and cricket as harmless entertainments, though the former was disapproved of in Italy, and his obvious desire to govern by consent and gain the agreement of the Rectors and Provincial Council to any changes he had in mind, all endeared him to the English Province and meant that even in the years when anti-Italian feeling was running very high, it was difficult not to remember this one Italian who had promoted and directed the most dynamic period of development in the Province's history.

<sup>50</sup> SDB. Archives GB. J. NOONAN, *Don Bosco's England*. Part IV, p. 390-391, p. 433, 445.

## THE PRELUDE TO INDEPENDENCE (1926-1930)

We are passing through a crisis, so serious, that we do not know how we shall come out of it... (Fr Angelo Franco, 1926)

### The succession

The death of Fr Scaloni in Africa made the appointment of his successor a more urgent matter than it would normally have been, though, in fact, he had completed his six year term as Provincial, and the Superior Council had already earmarked his successor.<sup>1</sup> The minutes of their meeting for the 27th January 1926, reveal that the Council had been ready to approve the nomination of Fr Angelo Franco, with a unanimous vote (6/6), as Provincial of the English Province.<sup>2</sup> From what has already been said about his academic qualifications and personal qualities and outlook, it was little wonder that the Superiors had decided to appoint him over the heads both of any English or Irish Salesians or indeed of any of the more prominent Italians in the Province, namely Fr James Simonetti, the Novice Master, or Fr Aeneas Tozzi, the pioneer of the South African foundation. The Superiors had hoped to be able to transfer Fr Scaloni from England to be Provincial of the houses in the Western United States.<sup>3</sup>

Upon the news of his death, it was decided to send out the nomination of Fr Franco as Provincial on the 27th of April.<sup>4</sup> Almost by return of post, Fr Franco replied in a letter which was read to the Council on the 4th of May. The Minutes recorded that:

A letter from Fr Angelo Franco was read which explained the reason why he believed that it would not be expedient for him to be made Provincial in England for the moment and why it would be permissible

<sup>1</sup> ACS. *Verbali delle Riunioni Capitolari*, vol. 4. See entry for 22nd Jan. 1926 where the fact is noted.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, See entry number § 3466: "Ciò posto si approva con voti 6/6 D. Franco Angelo ad Ispettore dell'Ispettorato Inglese."

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, § 3468: "D. Scaloni Francesco ad Ispettore delle case ad Ovest degli Stati Uniti."

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, § 3497. See entry for 27th April, 1926: "Si dice di mandare da qui a qualche giorno la nomina di Don Franco Angelo ad Ispettore dell'Ispettorato Inglese."

for him together with Fr James Simonetti to put forward the name of Fr Aeneas Tozzi as a more suitable person.<sup>5</sup>

At their next session on the 27th May, they unanimously elected Fr Aeneas Tozzi, the current Rector of Claremont in South Africa as the new English Provincial, informing him by telegram.<sup>6</sup>

Why Fr Franco declined to take on the responsibility remains something of a mystery, since his letter to the Superior Council is apparently lost. The fact that he was still relatively new to the English situation, having only arrived in England after the war, might be a reason, or his lack of experience outside the student house (though he had been Rector at Battersea from 1924-26) or his relative youth (though at forty-one he was hardly a youngster). Perhaps, more than anything else, it was the precarious financial state of the Province, which was wholly outside his expertise which prevented him accepting the appointment.

Fr Tozzi, on the other hand, had cut his teeth as a Rector dealing with the desperate financial crisis which had overtaken the Salesians in Cape Town under Fr Barni. Not only had Fr Tozzi managed to stave off bankruptcy: he had even managed to build up a flourishing school of Arts and Trades, housed in a brand new building, the Salesian Institute, Somerset Rd. and also to open an Agricultural school at Claremont.

That the financial state of the Province was causing some concern can be judged from the Report of a special Visitation carried out by Fr Anthony Candela between the death of Fr Scaloni and the return of Fr Tozzi from Africa.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Visitation of 1926**

Fr Anthony Candela was a Frenchman, born at Oran in French Algeria on the 20th December 1878. He was professed on the 20th September 1895, and ordained in Seville in 1904. Fr Rinaldi, the Superior General had appointed him to the Superior Council in 1925.<sup>8</sup>

He completed his report while he was staying at Limerick, having visited the new houses at Bolton and Warrenstown, both of which seemed

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, § 3518. See entry for 4th May: "Si legge una lettera di D. Franco Angelo che espone le ragioni per cui egli crede che non conviene per il momento sia Ispettore in Inghilterra e si permette insieme con D. Simonetti Giacomo di fare il nome di D. Tozzi Enea come la persona più indicata."

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* See entry 29th May 1926 (§ 3560).

<sup>7</sup> ACS. S.31.24 Inghilterra. (13) Visite D. Candela 1926.

<sup>8</sup> *Dizionario Biografico dei Salesiani*. See the entry for Fr Anthony Candela: ACS. S.31.24 Inghilterra. (13) Visite D. Candela 1926.

to be doing well. His report on the financial state of the province painted an altogether different picture.

The English-Irish Province

The economic situation is totally other than satisfactory — while each house, considered on its own, can carry on and each one pay their Provincial contribution for the maintenance of the Provincial and Vocations (i.e. the costs of educating the students), yet what wears them out and makes it impossible for them to develop and make the most urgent repairs, is the debt incurred for the foundation of the houses at Cowley, Pallaskerry and Bolton. The debt is as follows:

Cowley .....	£. 6,000
Pallaskerry .....	£. 17,250
Bolton .....	£. 7,000
	equals £. 30,250

The annual obligations which result are

Cowley .....	£. 360
Pallaskerry .....	£. 800
Bolton .....	£. 420
	equals £. 1,580

For mortgage

Cowley .....	£. 500
Pallaskerry .....	£. 250
	equals £. 750
	£. 750
	£. 1,580
Total	£. 2,330

...if we add to the £.2330 the sum necessary for the maintenance of the novices, philosophers and theologians and for the expenses of the Provincial, we arrive at the sum of £.5100 per year which must be found exclusively from the houses.

The visitor concluded:

1. that too great a sacrifice is being demanded of the houses,
2. that the houses are not only in the impossible position of being unable to develop but also find it impossible to make the repairs and improvements judged necessary and which a government inspection would certainly impose,
3. that this situation has an influence on the general spirit depressing it somewhat, as the confrères talk about the houses which are to blame,
4. that this situation is a cause of trouble for the poor Provincial. The Rector's adduce thousands of reasons for not paying all their 'quota', while the Provincial, on the other hand must safeguard the good name of the Congregation [by paying the debts], and thus finds himself caught between the hammer and the anvil.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> "Provincia Inglese-Irlandese. Situazione Finanziaria. È tutt'altro che soddisfacente. Le

Fr Candela proposed a solution which he believed would encourage a deeper attachment to and trust in the Major Superiors and would show that Visitations could also have other than spiritual advantages. He also declared that some people in the Province had told him that the house at Pallaskenry had been opened at the express wish of Fr Albera, at the cost of £.6,000 and that the Superior Council had not helped at all. Given that this sounds remarkably like some of Fr Sutherland's brand of special pleading, the source of that story would not be too far to seek.

His proposal included repaying the £.14,000 debt by means of raising £.8,000 from the Province itself and by a grant of £.6,000 from the Superior Council to the Province, or at least, as an interest free loan.<sup>10</sup>

Though it would not appear from the Annual accounts that the Superior Council made any gift to the Province, [The debt was not, in fact,

case (considerata ognuna da sè) potrebbero andare avanti e pagare facilmente la contribuzione ispettoriale pel mantenimento dell'Ispettore e delle vocazioni, ma quello che le esaurisce mettendole nell'impossibilità di svilupparsi e di fare anzi le riparazioni più urgenti, è il debito fatto per le tre fondazioni di Cowley, Pallaskenry e Bolton. Questo debito è il seguente:

Cowley .....	L.St.	6,000	
Pallaskenry .....	L.St.	17,250	
Bolton .....	L.St.	7,000	
	Pari a	L.St.	30,250

Le obbligazioni annue che ne derivano sono:

Interessi Cowley .....	L.St.	360	
Pallaskenry .....	L.St.	800	
Bolton .....	L.St.	420	
	Pari a	L.St.	1,580 L.St. 1,580

Per ammortizzamento:

Cowley .....	L.St.	500	
Bolton .....	L.St.	250	
	Pari a	L.St.	750 L.St. 750
		Totale	Lire 2,330

...Se aggiungiamo alle L.2,300 lire sterline le somme necessarie per il mantenimento dei novizi, dei filosofi e dei teologi e per le spese dell'Ispettore, arriviamo, per quest'anno, alla quantità di 5,100 lire che si deve ricavare esclusivamente dalle case.

Il visitatore ha constatato:

1. che si domanda un sacrificio troppo grande alle case,
2. che le case sono nell'impossibilità non solo di svilupparsi, ma di fare quelle riparazioni e miglioramenti giudicati necessari e che una visita governativa imporrebbe certamente,
3. che questa situazione influisce nello spirito generale per deprimerlo alquanto. I confratelli ne parlano, inveendo contro le case colpevoli,
4. che questa situazione è per il povero Ispettore una causa di disgusti. I Direttori adducono mille ragioni per non pagare tutta la quota fissata. L'Ispettore ha, per altra parte, da salvaguardare il buon nome della Congregazione e così si trova fra l'incudine e il martello."

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. The rest of the document spells out in detail his proposals for a remedy.

modified significantly till 1935]<sup>11</sup> Fr Candela's comments are fascinating for the light they throw on the morale of the Province and the tensions that troubled it.

His remarks about the loan or gift encouraging more attachment and trust of the English confrères towards the Superior Council, must suggest that such attachment and trust needed to be built up. There would seem to have been some evidence of the latent 'anti-Italianism' that Fr Scaloni had feared, in remarks like the one about Pallaskenry, being started at the express wish of Fr Albera but without any help being forthcoming, however ill-founded such ideas may have been.

The financial state of the Province would have given Fr Franco good grounds for feeling that it might be wiser to appoint someone with more financial expertise than himself.

### **The growth of 'anti-Italian' sentiment**

Fr Tozzi seems to have taken his appointment as an occasion to visit Italy on his way back from Africa, and wrote first from Alassio in January 1927 to Fr Gusmano explaining his movements.<sup>12</sup> He also encountered Fr Candela and accompanied him as far as San Remo and was impressed at his detailed and exact knowledge of the Province.<sup>13</sup> He left Alassio on the 9th of March 1927 for his holiday at home near Forlì and presumably arrived in England some time after Easter.

Some time during that same year, after the arrival of Fr Tozzi, Fr Franco wrote to Fr Peter Ricaldone, the Prefect General or Deputy of the Superior General, explaining the Province's difficulties.

You will be receiving a letter from the Italian clerics, I would ask you to consult Fr Tozzi, who I am sure will not advise that you should make an exception, so as not to stir up jealousy and recriminations among the English clerics.

I take this opportunity to explain the views of Fr Simonetti and myself on our affairs. We are passing through a crisis, so serious, that we do not know how we shall come out of it. In a few words, it can be described thus. When you came to England you found the danger of 'anti-italianism' [at work], but at that time, there was still Fr Macey and at least in a few of the houses, there was some attachment to the ancient traditions set up by the first Salesians. Now, 'anti-italianism' is not very strong but there is a very grave danger facing us. Nearly all the Rectors

<sup>11</sup> SDB. GB. The bound volume *Rendiconto Amministrativo (1911-1939)*. See the entries for Pallaskenry for the years from 1926 till 1935-6 when the debt fell from L.12,800 to L.7,500.

<sup>12</sup> ASC. S.31.22 Inghilterra. Tozzi - Gusmano (20.1.27).

<sup>13</sup> ASC. S.31.22 Inghilterra. Tozzi - Gusmano (9.3.27).



have introduced *traditions* and *new ideas* (with regard to poverty — holidays — practices of piety etc.) which are harmful.

There is a tacit conspiracy among the Rectors, Prefects, and headmasters to ignore our regulations and introduce a freedom which they do not even have in English Colleges.

The position of the Provincial is quite difficult and painful. Fr Tozzi takes it so much to heart, it is a wonder how his health has not succumbed altogether.

The situation is quite critical, on the one hand, because the new generation is being mis-directed, on the other, because, given this worldly spirit, vocations are becoming less numerous. I am sure that Fr Tozzi would have his spirits raised if he could make a complete report to the Superior Council about the affairs of the Province, but he is probably not bold enough to take up the time of Fr Rinaldi, or of yourself or the other Superiors, which is so precious these days. But I am sure that he would feel comforted if he could leave Turin convinced that the Superiors are in touch with all the facts and are with him.

Please excuse the freedom with which I have written, but I had to write to you about the Italian clerics and I felt I should open my heart to you. The Italian clerics are doing very well. Next year we would be delighted to welcome seven or eight more, but we would prefer that they should be novices for reasons which I will be able to explain verbally.<sup>14</sup>

Fr Franco's letter casts a revealing light on the situation in the

<sup>14</sup> ASC. S.31.22 Inghilterra. Franco - Ricaldone I. 1927: "Salesian Missionary House, Cowley, Oxon. Riceverà una lettera dai chierici Italiani; la pregherei di consultare D. Tozzi il quale sono sicuro non consiglierà che si faccia *una eccezione* per non destare gelosie e recriminazioni tra i chierici Inglesi. Prendo questa occasione per manifestare ai superiori il punto di vista mia e di D. Simonetti circa le cose nostre. Stiamo attraversando una crisi assai grave, e non si sa come uscirne. In poche parole tutto si riduce a questo. Quando lei venne in Inghilterra (In 1924 Fr Ricaldone visited England but there does not appear to be a copy of his visitation report in the Central Archives;) ha trovato il pericolo dell'anti-italianismo, ma allora c'era ancora D. Macey e almeno in alcune case si era ancora attaccati alle antiche tradizioni messe dai primi Salesiani. Adesso l'anti-italianismo non è molto forte, ma c'è *un pericolo più grave*. Quasi tutti i Direttori hanno introdotto tradizioni ed idee *nuove* (povertà - vacanze -pratiche di pietà etc.) che sono deleterie. È una congiura tacita tra Direttori, Prefetti, consiglieri scolastici per ignorare i nostri Regolamenti ed introdurre libertà che ci sono neppure nei collegi Inglesi. La posizione dell'Ispezzore assai difficile e penosa. D. Tozzi si prende molto le cose a cuore ed è un miracolo che la sua salute non soccomba intieramente. La situazione è assai critica sia perché le nuove generazioni si orientano male sia perché dato questo spirito mondano le vocazioni vengono meno. Sono sicuro che D. Tozzi sarà assai sollevato se potrà fare una relazione completa al Superiore Generale delle cose dell'Ispezzoria: forse egli non oserà togliere tempo così prezioso, in questi giorni al Sig. Don Rinaldi, a Lei ed altri Superiori. Ma certo che egli sentirà conforto se può lasciare Torino colla persuasione che i superiori sono al corrente di tutto e sono con lui. Scusi la libertà di questa mia lettera. Ma dovendo scriverle riguardo i chierici Italiani ho pensato di aprirle un po' il mio cuore. I chierici Italiani fanno bene. L'anno venturo saremo lieti di accogliere altri sette od otto, ma preferiremmo che fossero novizi per ragioni che poi le esporrò a voce."

Province as he saw it in the late 1920's. Just as he was keen for some of the young English Salesians to study in Rome, he was also keen that some young Italian students should come to England to learn an important missionary language and appreciate its culture, and also to share, almost unconsciously, their own cultural closeness to the centre of Salesian Tradition in Turin.

Fr Franco also showed himself an acute observer of the personality of Fr Tozzi. He was well aware of his tendency to become isolated and overwhelmed by problems, and was prepared to write to Fr Ricaldone to enlist his support for Fr Tozzi in his difficulties.

The chief problem he highlighted was that of inculturation or the transmission of values, that problematic process of the communication of the living Salesian tradition, culturally conditioned as it was, into a different and partly alien English setting, which in many ways regarded itself as the predominant if not supreme world culture, and certainly one with very little to learn from the Italians.

Fr Franco regarded the English Rectors' departures from the Regulations in the matter of holidays, poverty and particularly 'freedom not even given in English colleges' as a sort of tacit conspiracy against the Salesian tradition, betraying in his judgements, some of his own cultural assumptions, despite his undoubted admiration and love of things English.

### **Fr Tozzi's view of the situation**

During the following year, 1928, Fr Tozzi, himself wrote to Fr Ricaldone giving him his own assessment of the situation.

...there is no apparent opposition to me, either active or organised. But there is apathy — there is none of that love of the Congregation which attracts, coordinates, creates — it lacks life. There is work, but it is imperfect and it fades.

I am not a pessimist but...<sup>15</sup>

Fr Tozzi, then, went on to enumerate the three evils which he saw as dogging the Province: firstly, the practice of 'supplying' for parish priests at weekends, and during the holidays, which he regarded as 'the original sin' of the Province; secondly, the holidays themselves; and thirdly, a whole list of minor abuses such as the fact that the youngsters were allowed to keep

<sup>15</sup> ACS. S31.22 Inghilterra. Tozzi - Ricaldone (26.XI.1928): "Non mi si affaccia una opposizione o attiva o organizzata: Ma vi è apatia — non vi è quell'amore della Congregazione che lega, coordina, crea — manca la vita. Vi è lavoro, ma è imperfetto e langue. Non sono pessimista: ma [...]."

money, that letters were in the community given out unopened, and that some of the older Salesians smoked, and had newspapers.<sup>16</sup> The sort of mentality which regarded these practices as 'abuses' or at least, dangerous 'occasions' was a product of a rather circumscribed view of the part religious orders were supposed to play in the church. He seemed to regard anything which took a Salesian outside the normal setting of his community's work as being dangerous, even if it was helping the parish clergy on a Sunday. This almost enclosed mindset meant that even minor infractions became magnified out of all proportion. Very quickly in this sort of cramped atmosphere, any personal initiative and creativity were seen as tantamount to rebellion and it is no surprise that apathy was the result. Yet what has to be said in fairness, is that there can be no doubt about Fr Tozzi's sincerity and deep personal faith and courage. He continued to Fr Ricaldone:

One needs 'guts' to see all this and keep up one's courage. Even courage alone is of little use, but constant faith in Mary, Most Holy, can do everything.<sup>17</sup>

But his reaction to this challenging situation, was to impose an even tighter rein.

We are preparing a Custom Book which should legitimate what ever can be allowed and close the door to real disorders. Some points have been discussed in the Council, others with the confrères and outsiders who might help.<sup>18</sup>

But given the already highly specific nature of the *Regulations*, which governed every detail of the daily life of the communities and individual down to the regulation of when those who could not go for a walk with the pupils, were allowed out for a walk,<sup>19</sup> it is difficult to see that more rules could mean anything but further restrictions.

It is also worth noting that there would appear to have been little or no effort made to win the approval or agreement of the whole Province or even

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. The list of evils.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.: \*"Ci vuole dello stomaco vedere tutto, mantenere il coraggio. Il coraggio solo può poco, la fede costante, Maria SS. può tutto."

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.: "Stiamo preparando un costumiere che legittimi ciò che si può fare — e chiuda la porta ai veri disordini — alcuni punti li discuto in consiglio, altri coi confratelli od esterni che possono aiutare."

<sup>19</sup> *Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St. Francis of Sales. Authorized translation* (Madras, 1967), Regulation 8: "The members who cannot go for a walk with the pupils may with the knowledge of the Rector, go for a walk once a week, ordinarily for the space of about two or three hours; but no one, as far as possible should go out by himself. On every other occasion a special reason is required as well as the permission of the Rector."

the Rectors for these measures, rather, it would seem to have been a question of their codification followed by their publication and implementation from above.

### The foundation of a House for Aspirants and Missionaries

The other remedy which Fr Tozzi looked to for the improvement of the situation was the foundation of a house specially for aspirants and missionaries, where the genuine spirit of the Society could be instilled. To this end, he wanted the direction of the house to be under the direct control of Fr Franco at Cowley or of himself. He evidently shared Fr Franco's distrust of English Rectors.<sup>20</sup>

He explained to Fr Ricaldone that two bishops had expressed themselves willing to allow the Salesians to enter their dioceses to found a missionary college or aspirantate, namely the bishops of Shrewsbury and Lancaster. He also reported that he and Fr Franco had visited several houses and discovered two possible places. The better adapted appeared to be at Market Drayton, which was convenient for both Oxford and the North. He further informed Fr Ricaldone that he hoped to find the money for the purchase of this property from Fr Tornquist and the periodical *the Help of Christians*.<sup>21</sup>

Fr Adolfo Tornquist must rank among the most colourful and unlikely figures ever to enter the Salesian Society. He was born on December 4th 1887, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. His father Ernest Tornquist belonged to a Swedish Protestant family (though Ernest had been baptised a Catholic). The family had large industrial and financial interests and Fr Tornquist's father had set up the *Banco Tornquist* and lived in a magnificent residence in the vicinity of Bahia Blanca, and had served as a deputy in the National Assembly.

Adolfo had spent a year and a half in an English preparatory school at Eastbourne in 1899 and had qualified as a civil engineer. But he had decided in 1915 that he wanted to become a priest and armed with a letter of recommendation from the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, set off for the

<sup>20</sup> ACS. S31.22 Tozzi - Ricaldone (26.XI.1928): "desidero far dipendere questa casa (come una succursale) da Cowley o direttamente dall'Ispettore."

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.: "Per la casa Missionaria; due vescovi quello di Lancaster e quello di Shrewsbury ci permettono di entrare nelle loro diocesi. Don Franco ed io abbiamo visitato varie case in vendita. Finora abbiamo trovato due posti buoni, il più adattato è a Market Drayton con facili treni [...] Pel denaro facciamo calcolo sulla promessa del caro Don Tornquist, con cui fare l'acquisto — col Periodico *Help of Christians* speriamo trovare gli aiuti per mantenere la casa e la famiglia."

United States to find a suitable seminary. Having had some difficulty in finding a place, he ended up being welcomed by the Salesians to their seminary at Hawthorne in New York. He was ordained there in 1920 *de servitio ecclesiae* (i.e. not for any particular diocese).

After his ordination, he travelled to Europe, where his mother lived and where he encountered Cardinal Giovanni Cagliero, the first Salesian cardinal, whose secretary he became. Under the influence of this outstanding man, he became a Salesian novice in November of that year and was professed in 1922.

He spent a good part of his early years as a Salesian distributing his very considerable personal wealth to new Salesian foundations all over the world. He was responsible for building the central Salesian Theological College at the Crocetta in Turin, and also paid for the founding of the English Missionary College and aspirantate. He died at the age of 83 on the 20th April, 1971.<sup>22</sup>

On 24th December 1929, he sent a telegram from Cairo to Fr Tozzi at Battersea which read:

Will send money next month — Tornquist.<sup>23</sup>

This would appear to have been a second instalment of his donation because the audit sheet for 1928-29 had already recorded a payment of £.5,000 from Fr Tornquist towards the aspirantate.<sup>24</sup>

The foundation of a special house for preparing youngsters for Salesian life particularly on the Missions had received added impetus from the celebrations which had been held in Turin in 1925 to commemorate the golden Jubilee of the first Salesian Missionary Expedition in 1875. The new Mission territories which the Salesians had accepted in India (1922) and Hong Kong meant there was increased demand for English-speaking missionaries in all of these countries.

These demands had come home to Fr Tozzi in Fr Ricaldone's request for Fr McCourt to be freed to go to the Missions. Fr Tozzi refused this particular request but suggested to Fr Ricaldone what he regarded as promising idea, namely that the island of Malta, an obvious source of missionary vocations should be attached to the English Province rather than maintain the existing ties with Sicily.

Thinking of the need for vocations for ourselves and for the missions and for the sisters of Mary Help of Christians, perhaps, the island of

<sup>22</sup> ACS. Lettera Mortuaria: D. Adolfo Tornquist.

<sup>23</sup> SDB. GB. Shrigley File: Marconigram Tornquist Tozzi (24th Dec. 1929).

<sup>24</sup> SDB. GB. Bound volume *Rendiconto Amministrativo 1928-9*.

Malta could make a considerable contribution. From these islands the emigrants all turn towards the British dominions and the young men and women with vocations prefer England and do not want to go to Sicily.

I also believe that the Maltese might do better under the cold English discipline. This idea came to me having talked at length, to Mgr. Galea, the cousin of the *Commendatore* in London.<sup>25</sup>

### **Negotiations for the foundation at Shrigley Park**

Negotiations with Bishop Hugh Singleton about the opening of a college or house 'for preparing young men under training for your Society' had begun in late 1928, and the bishop made several conditions for his approval:

I understand it is solely for the training of your own subjects for the purposes of your own Society, not a boarding school for others. As you may be aware there is a boarding school at Pell Wall Hall adjoining Market Drayton.<sup>26</sup>

The Bishop's second conditions was that,

Your Fathers should not canvas in the diocesan schools for subjects for your Society. I would have no objection to your receiving any who might offer themselves. Naturally we would wish to have a first choice for ecclesiastical studentships for the diocese.

Thirdly, that we would not wish any detriment to existing schools such as the novitiate for training Christian Brothers at Carlett Park near Birkenhead and that of the Brothers of Christian Instruction at Pell Wall Hall or any clashing of interests.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps it was with these considerations in mind that the site chosen was away from Market Drayton, in the North east corner of the diocese at Shrigley Park, about five miles from Macclesfield, the former seat of the Lowther family.

Fr Tozzi informed Fr Ricaldone of his purchase of Shrigley in January

<sup>25</sup> ACS. S31.22 Inghilterra. Tozzi - Ricaldone (20.X.1928): "Pensando al bisogno di vocazioni per noi e per le Missioni e per le Suore di Maria SS. Ausiliatrice: forse l'isola di Malta potrebbe dare un contributo considerevole. Dall'Isola l'emigrazione si volge tutta ai Domini Britannici, e la gioventù maschile e femminile con vocazione preferiscono l'Inghilterra e non vorrebbero andare in Sicilia [...]. E credo che il Maltese si arrenda meglio alla disciplina fredda Inglese [...] Quest'idea m'è sorta dopo aver parlato a lungo con Mons. Galea il cugino del Commendatore, in Londra."

<sup>26</sup> SDB. GB. Shrigley. Hugh, Bishop of Shrewsbury - Fr Provincial SDB (1 Nov. 1928).

<sup>27</sup> SDB. GB. Shrigley. Hugh, Bishop of Shrewsbury - Fr Provincial SDB (16 Nov. 1928).



1929, detailing its strategic position, near the parts of the country richest in Catholics.<sup>28</sup>

Shrigley Park was a large Georgian country house with 270 acres of farm and parkland. The Salesians acquired it in the summer of 1929, after it had lain empty for a year since the death of its life-long owner Colonel Lowther. The first Salesians arrived in the summer,

...three priests, three clerics and three lay brothers who prepared the Hall as a school for the first 54 students who arrived in the September. They came mostly from Ireland and when school began, Fr Joseph Ciantar was acting Rector, Fr Murray, Prefect of Studies assisted by two clerics.<sup>29</sup>

Fr Ciantar had made immensely successful vocations promotions tours both of Northern Ireland and the South, to the chagrin, it was said, of some of the Irish clergy. Some of the modifications required to adapt the building were as follows:

The larger of the two lakes was banked up and used to provide the house with electric light instead of gas. The projected increase of students the following year to 100 necessitated the building of a new dormitory, which was done by raising the roof of the house.<sup>30</sup>

The aim of the school was to take boys at the age of twelve and upwards and while preparing them for the Oxford School Leaving examinations, to prepare them also spiritually and academically for the Novitiate and for entry to the Salesian life.

By 1932-3, the school had also to be adapted for use as a house of Theological Studies, under the direction of Fr Franco. Under his inspiration the first sod was cut for a new church in honour of St. John Bosco, the founder of the Salesians, on Easter Sunday 1934, the day of his canonisation. The Church was completed and opened on 24th July 1938, under the direction of Fr Thomas Hall who was by then, the Rector, Fr Franco having moved on to found a new house of Theological Studies at

<sup>28</sup> ACS. S.31.22 Inghilterra. Tozzi - Ricaldone (27 Jan. 1929): "Abbiamo comprato un buon posto 'Shrigley Hall' fra Macclesfield e Manchester, in contatto di quattro diocesi Shrewsbury, Salford, Leeds e Nottingham, a poca distanza di Liverpool e della archidiocesi di Birmingham, la cui parte più ricca di Cattolici è a poche miglia; siamo nel cuore dell'Inghilterra cattolica e il posto più strategico che ci sia capitato, in poche ore si è a Glasgow nella Scozia e negli altri centri cattolici [...] La nostra offerta di L.8,000 fu accettata, ne volevano L.12,500 il fabbricato in pietra costò L.35,000 nel 1875, vi sono 260 acri di terreno e quattro casette oltre a lavanderia, stalle ed ogni comodità ma il Palazzo è ampio, con corridoi, è adattabile."

<sup>29</sup> SDB. GB. Shrigley: *Manchester Guardian* (8 Jan. 1930).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

Blaisdon Hall. near Gloucester in 1935.<sup>31</sup>

One might have expected that with a novitiate and House of Studies set up at Oxford and a junior seminary at Shrigley, Fr Franco would have been satisfied, but the steady increase in the number of students in training, meant that these houses could not accommodate them all. More than that, Fr Franco firmly believed that there was a need for a qualitative leap in regard to the provision of opportunities for the study of theology. Although he had managed to improve the quality of the basic education that the students wanting to enter the Salesians received and their philosophical training, theology was still largely taught in the evenings, by some of the older priests to students who had often other major responsibilities in the schools.

He wrote to Fr Peter Berruti, the Superior Councillor in charge of ecclesiastical studies, in June 1934:

Above all it is well that the Superiors should know that, in fact, with regard to ecclesiastical studies, things are not yet put in order. There are still lots of aspirants who have only done three years Latin and a few more of English. Philosophy is not done seriously. We still lack a Rector for the Novitiate and studentate. The theologians still teach and do assisting here at Shrigley. Altogether we are not yet in order.

He further complained that the diocesan clergy said that the Salesians were ill-prepared as priests, but what seemed to gall him more than anything else, was that Fr Tozzi was not willing to discuss these matters any further and

...I am taken as something of an idealist and my words have little weight.<sup>32</sup>

His protests did evidently not go unheeded because scarcely a year later he had moved to Blaisdon to set up a House for Theological Studies.

### **A postscript on the crisis of 1939-40**

With the worsening climate of relations between Britain and the Fascist regime in Italy, particularly during the Abyssinian war, British

<sup>31</sup> SDB. GB. Shrigley: Typescript Chronicle of early years.

<sup>32</sup> ACS. S.31.22 Inghilterra. Franco - Berruti (24 June 1934): "tuttavia è bene che i superiori sappiano che in fatto di studi ecclesiastici non ci siamo ancora messi in regola. Ci sono ancora parecchi aspiranti che fanno tre soli anni di latino — ed altrettanto di inglese. La filosofia non è ancora fatta con serietà. Manca ancora il Direttore della casa di noviziato e studentato. I teologi fanno ancora scuola ed assistenza qui a Shrigley. Insomma non siamo ancora apposto [...]. Io passo un poco come un idealista e le mie parole hanno poco peso."

Catholics were anxious, in general, to distance themselves from any connection with Mussolini's Government which appeared to have, at least, the neutrality, if not the tacit support of the Vatican. As a result, Cardinal Hinsley, at the end of September 1935, forwarded a petition from the Catholic Council for International Relations to the Secretary of State, Cardinal Pacelli, with a covering letter which amounted to little less than a private rebuke to the Holy See expressing his views.

The enclosed memorandum I send to your Eminence because it clearly expresses the anxiety of our Catholic people concerning the necessity of dissociating the church from the action of the Italian Government in refusing the good offices of the League of Nations for the settlement of its claims in Africa and consequently in taking on itself the grave responsibility of war... For my part, I endorse the statement of the organisation of the faithful... and I humbly express my sympathies with their desire to make clear to our fellow countrymen already so largely hostile to the 'Roman Communion' that the Catholic Church is in no way associated with what outside Italy is considered a violation of international agreements and an act of aggression. I have also reason to know that my fellow Archbishops and bishops in this country would recommend this appeal to our Holy Father.<sup>33</sup>

The Spanish Civil war made the position of British Catholics even more difficult as it seemed as if there was an unholy alliance of the Catholic Church with Franco, Mussolini and Hitler, the powers of darkness. All of this naturally exacerbated any latent ill-feeling which existed between the native Salesians and their Italian Superiors.

There was however, a group among the English hierarchy, led by Bishop Amigo of Southwark who disapproved both of the style and content of Hinsley's approach to international problems. Being a native of Gibraltar, he, no doubt, felt strong support for the Church in Spain and would have supported Franco. He had worked for the appointment of an Apostolic Delegate who could represent the Vatican quite separately from the Archbishop of Westminster.

Rome appeared to accede to his views, with the appointment of Archbishop William Godfrey as Apostolic Delegate on the 21st November 1938. His position as official Vatican representative to the Catholic bishops of England, Wales and Scotland and yet, at the same time, unofficial papal ambassador to the British Government, gave him a rather strange role in the Church in Britain, being both involved with it and yet outside its ordinary running.

<sup>33</sup> T. MOLONEY, *Westminster, Whitehall and the Vatican. The Role of Cardinal Hinsley*. London, 1985, p. 49.

These two features, namely the increasing unpopularity of Italy in the country at large and the appointment of an Englishman to be the direct representative of the Vatican in England, allowed the British Salesians, by an extraordinary coincidence, to secure the appointment of an Englishman to succeed Fr Tozzi.

The effective government of the Province was in the hands of three Italians, Fathers Tozzi, Franco and Simonetti. While Fr Franco was the most anglophile of the three, he seemed to feel himself to have less and less influence, while Frs Tozzi and Simonetti probably confirmed one another's suspicions about the English confrères lack of attachment to Salesian Traditions.

The crisis which emerged in 1939 was not altogether unforeseen. Although it concentrated on the question of the nationality of the Superior, it had also a good deal to do with the particular personalities involved. During the Visitation of Fr Serié to the Province in 1934, the peculiarities of the régime developed by Frs Tozzi and Simonetti particularly were noted and commented on by the Visitor:

I submit the following observations with all simplicity in the name of the Lord; Fr Provincial: Too much of Mussolini, too little of Don Bosco and a dictatorial manner are all traits which do not inspire confidence. He does not easily listen to what the confrères have to say. Occasionally he manifests his antipathy for the Irish.<sup>34</sup>

As a result of this combination, of a dictatorial manner and a dislike of the Irish, what was produced was what Fr Tozzi had not experienced on his arrival namely an 'active and organised opposition'.

The contrast between Fr Tozzi's experience of extreme financial difficulties in South Africa and the relative availability of resources in England and Ireland and their relative mismanagement in terms of the debts built up, must have made it very difficult for Fr Tozzi to feel that he ought to accept too easily criticisms made by the Irish and English confrères. In its turn this apparent inability to listen or take advice must have confirmed in the minds of the confrères their worst fears of domination by a resurgent Italian nationalism which was caricatured for the British in the almost comic presentation in the press of Benito Mussolini, *the Duce*.

Coupled with this was Fr Tozzi's reputed dislike of the Irish. This dislike more usually associated with the English, perhaps derived from the

<sup>34</sup> ACS. S.3124 Inghilterra. Visita Straordinaria Don Serié, 1934: "Sottometto con tutta semplicità in nomine Domini le seguenti osservazioni: Il Sig. Ispettore: Troppo del Mussolini; troppo poco di Don Bosco. Maniere dittatorie, scatti, non ispira fiducia. Non ascolta facilmente i confratelli. Alle volte manifesta la sua antipatia per gli irlandesi."

revolutionary element in Irish Nationalism which may have frightened the law-abiding Fr Tozzi. This was the critical combination which probably led to the formation of the organised anti-italian alliance. As Fr Serié wrote:

27. The question of the Irish Language. Now altogether suppressed. This suppression seems imprudent... when relations between the two countries are anything but friendly. In other religious Orders even the missionary ones and even that of Mill Hill, in Ireland, the Irish language is studied and spoken at certain centres.

28. Fr Provincial is sometimes imprudent when he speaks of the President of Ireland not always with respect.<sup>35</sup>

In his own submission to Fr Serié, his *pro memoria* included in the visitation notes, Fr Tozzi showed his lack sympathy with Irish national sensibilities.

1. The Anglo-Irish Province, as the Irish like to call it: but the times would suggest that the title to be adopted should be the '*Ispettoria inglese*' embracing all the peoples with that language in Europe and in the dominions which the superiors up to now have united with it. The name Anglo-Irish instead of widening the scope in fact limits it. There are Scots, Welsh and South Africans.<sup>36</sup>

For the XV General Chapter of 1938, the delegate elected by the Provincial Chapter was Fr Richard McElligott. He was born in 1889 in Kerry and ordained in Cape Town in 1917. He would appear to have been in much the same mould as Fr Sutherland (who addressed his personal memoirs to him rather than the Provincial in 1947). Fr McElligott represented that rather independent strain or tradition started by Fr Macey and so much disliked by Fr Tozzi. The active and organised opposition which Fr Tozzi had not thought to exist, eventually found a champion and leader in Fr McElligott. His objections seem to have been mostly about Fr Tozzi's somewhat autocratic style of government.

When he arrived in Turin he sought out Fr Candela and explained to him the difficulties of the Province as he saw them. Fr Candela left us the following report:

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.: "27. La storia e la lingua Irlandese [...] Ora tutto soppresso. Pare imprudente questa soppressione [...] quando le relazioni tra i due paesi non sono tanto amichevoli. Negli altri ordini religiosi, anche missionari e financo quello di Mill Hill, in Irlanda, la lingua Irlandese è studiata e parlata in certi centri. 28. Il Sig. Ispettore imprudente qualche volta quando parla del presidente d'Irlanda. Non ne parla sempre con rispetto."

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. Pro Memoria (Tozzi - Serié): "1. L'Ispettoria Anglo-Irlandese, così amano chiamarla gli Irlandesi: ma il tempo suggerirà se la denominazione sia da adottarsi. Ispettoria Inglese, abbraccia tutti i popoli di tale lingua in Europa e nei Domini che i Superiori finora hanno unito ad essa. Il nome Anglo-Irlandese, anziché ampliare limita. Vi sono Scozzesi e Welch, e Sud-Africani."

In general there is a sense of discouragement in the Province because even the best feel that they do not have the confidence of the Superiors... The Superiors in Turin are well impressed by the work of Fr Tozzi and of the development of new foundations — but not all are happy. Shrigley is a house for aspirants, almost completely composed of young Irishmen; the offerings are in great part from Ireland, there should now be a house like this in Ireland.  
...Fr Tozzi does not ask for advice: he does things on his own; the Provincial Council is not active. Fr McElligott has the title Provincial Economist but knows nothing of the accounts of the Province. Fr McElligott is in the Council and is confessor to the Theologians.<sup>37</sup>

This disturbing report seems not to have produced any effective action on behalf of the Superiors, no doubt by now preoccupied with the approach of war and naturally trusting the immensely experienced Fr Tozzi.

Fr Tozzi, despite the protests, continued to run the Province without much consultation, particularly in financial matters. As a result, on his return from the General Chapter, Fr McElligott became convinced that he could find no effective redress either at home, despite the support of a good deal of popular feeling, or even in Turin, where Fr Tozzi was very highly regarded.

What provoked the crisis was the fact that on his return to Blaisdon, sometime during the following year Fr McElligott gave an account of what he had said and done during the General Chapter to obtain an Englishman as Provincial to one of his theology classes. The proceedings of this secret session became public knowledge, because one of the theologians wrote to a companion in one of the nearby houses and as a result Fr McElligott was removed from the house and sent as Rector to Warrenstown. This move he saw as a punishment for a crime in which his side of the case had never even been heard.

The result was that Fr McElligott and a number of sympathisers, among them Frs Andrew Boyle and Tom Daly, who were unwilling to display their internal disputes before diocesan bishops, saw the appointment of the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Godfrey as an ideal

<sup>37</sup> ACS. S.3124 Inghilterra. Visita Straordinaria D. Candela: "Ispettorica Inglese. Osservazioni e Cose dette a D. Candela da Fr McElligott in occasione del Capitolo Generale 1938. In generale vi è un senso di scoraggiamento nell'Ispettorica perché sentono anche i migliori di non avere la fiducia dei Superiori [...] I superiori di Torino sono bene impressionati dell'operato di D. Tozzi e dello sviluppo delle fondazioni. Ma non tutte sono felici. Shrigley è una casa di Aspiranti quasi completamente composta di giovani Irlandesi; le offerte sono in grande parte dall'Irlanda. Ora una tale casa dovrebbe essere in Irlanda [...]. D. Tozzi non domanda consiglio. Fa da se; il Consiglio Ispettorico non è attivo. Fr McElligott è portato come Economo ispettoriale e ignora tutto della contabilità dell'Ispettorica [...] Fr McElligott è nel Consiglio ed è il confessore dei teologi."



opportunity to appeal over the heads of the Superiors to the Vatican in order to have a native Salesian appointed as Fr Tozzi's successor.

In Fr McElligott's petition to the Apostolic Delegate in 1939 he alleged that Fr Tozzi's lack of consultation of the Provincial Council, particularly on financial decisions, was seriously irregular since they sometimes required the formal consent of the Council.<sup>38</sup>

Fr Tozzi was summoned to the Delegation and presented with the charges by the archbishop without being given any indication who was behind them. In his written reply, he formally objected to not being able to face his accusers and was obviously deeply stung by the charge of financial irregularity, which if it had any foundation at all, probably lay more in the Council's lack of interest or expertise than any desire of Fr Tozzi to avoid their scrutiny. His reply was to deny the charges outright and to demand to face his accusers.<sup>39</sup>

The clearest evidence of how effective the Apostolic Delegate's intervention was, may be judged from a letter from Fr Ricaldone, the Rector Major to Fr Candela dated Oct. 15, 1939.

...And now to an urgent matter. Fr Tozzi writes that things are taking the turn we foresaw. The Delegate was interested by some people and urges a solution. I believe that it is indispensable for you to be present immediately.

It is well that the change results as it is in effect willed by us and not imposed.

It is right, however, that Fr Tozzi should be offered in a tangible way some signs of recognition required by his great work and heroic sacrifice. Make it understood that we want the closest union and the greatest charity.

You would do well to listen to the Delegate — you are to say to him that we had already anticipated the desires etc.

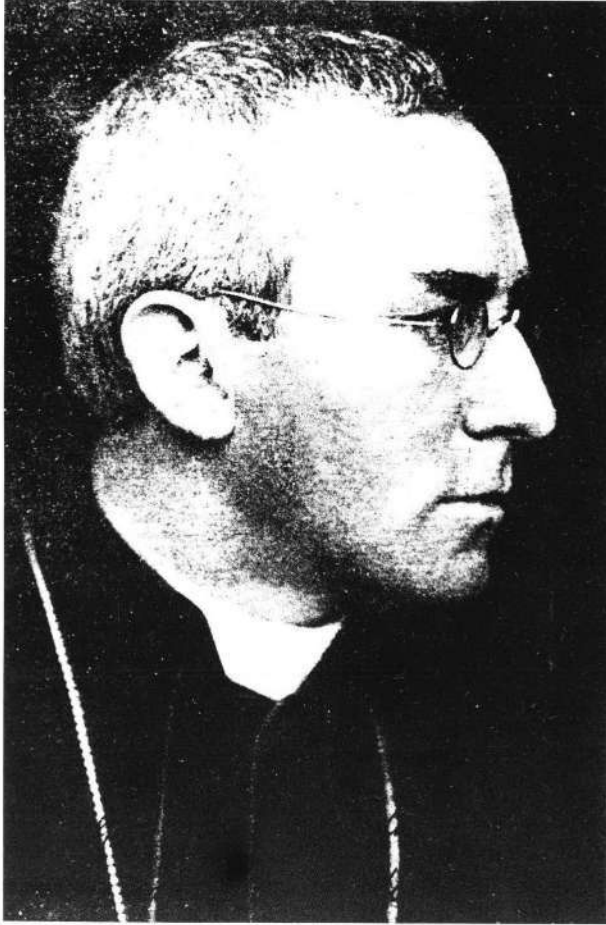
Then, it is necessary to stay awake so that nothing changes with regard to life or discipline.

You will see whether it would be good for Tozzi and the others to remain there or to go elsewhere. Certainly Fr Tozzi, Fr Franco, Fr Simonetti, Fr Roffinella, Fr Coppo etc would be a real providence for United States.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Archive of the Papal Pro-Nunciature (Parkside, Wimbledon) London. Rev. R. McElligott - Archbishop Godfrey [undated memorial] (1939). By the kindness of His Excellency Archbishop Bruno Heim, the former Pro-Nuncio, I was allowed to consult these two letters regarding this dispute.

<sup>39</sup> Archive of the Papal Pro-Nunciature, London. Rev. A. Tozzi - Archbishop Godfrey [undated memorial] (1939).

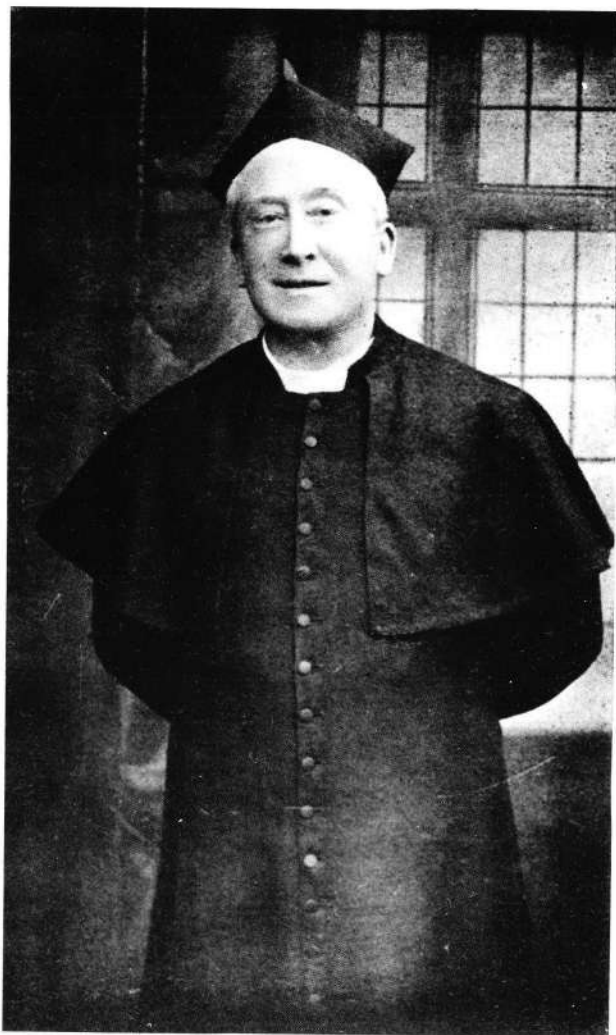
<sup>40</sup> ACS. S.3124 Inghilterra. Visita Straordinaria Don Candela 1939-40. Ricaldone - Candela 15.9.39: "...Ed ora un affare urgente. Scrive D. Tozzi che le cose prendono la piega prospettata — Fu interessato da alcuni il Delegato ed urge una soluzione — Credo sia



*His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop  
of Westminster  
Card. Francis Bourne – First Salesian Cooperator  
in Battersea*



*Fr. Edward Patrick MacKiernan  
the first Irish Salesian  
(1861-1888)*



*Fr. Charles B. Macey*  
*(1854-1928)*



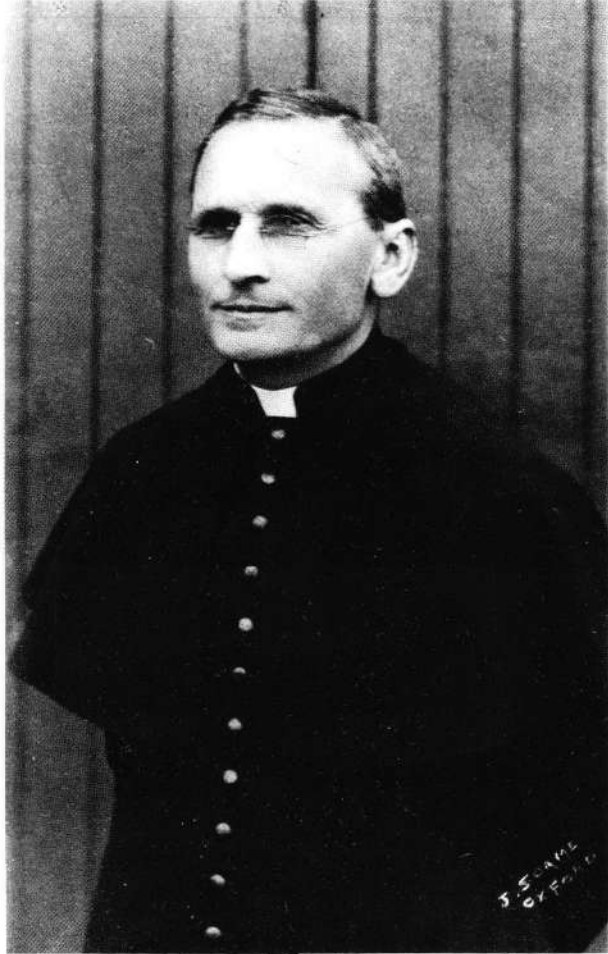
*The provincial  
Fr. Francis Scaloni  
in two guises  
(1861-1926)*





*Fr. Aloysius Sutherland*  
*(1880-1958)*





*Fr. James Simonetti*  
(1880-1961)



*Fr. Angelo Franco*  
(1885-1966)



*Fr. Aeneas Tozzi*  
*(1875-1958)*



*Fr. Thomas W. Hall*  
*(1902-1987)*



*A lay Brother  
(= coadiutor)  
in clerical dress*

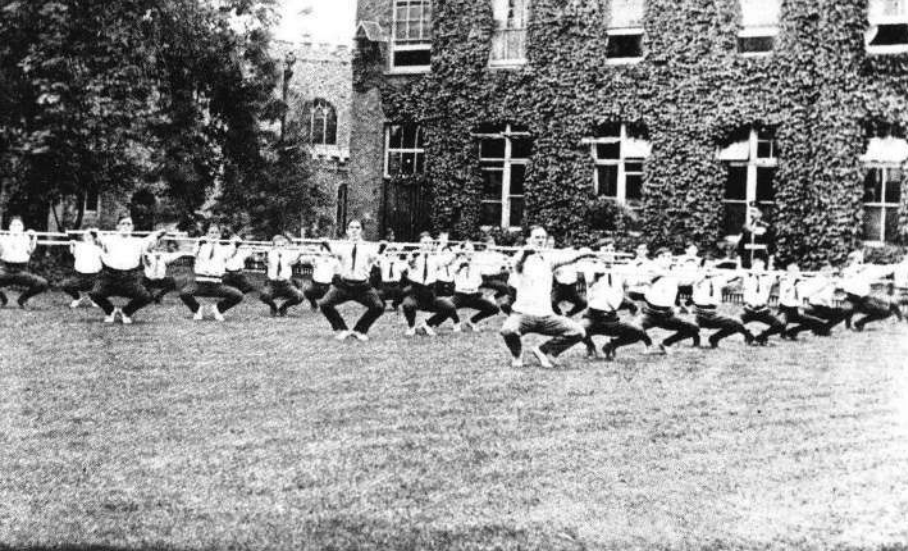
*Bro. Patrick Brassel  
(1875-1966)*



*Salesian school, London (1912)*



*The school Chapel*



*The upper  
forms at  
drill  
(1912)*



*Tennis  
players-  
Seniors  
(1912)*



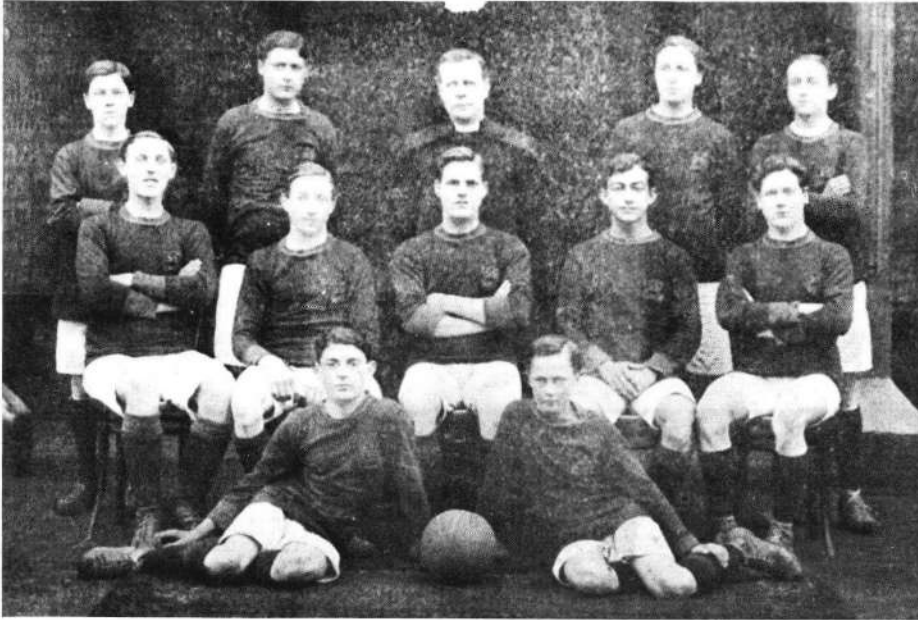
*The school  
Playground  
(1913)*



*The hockey  
cup  
winners  
(1914)*

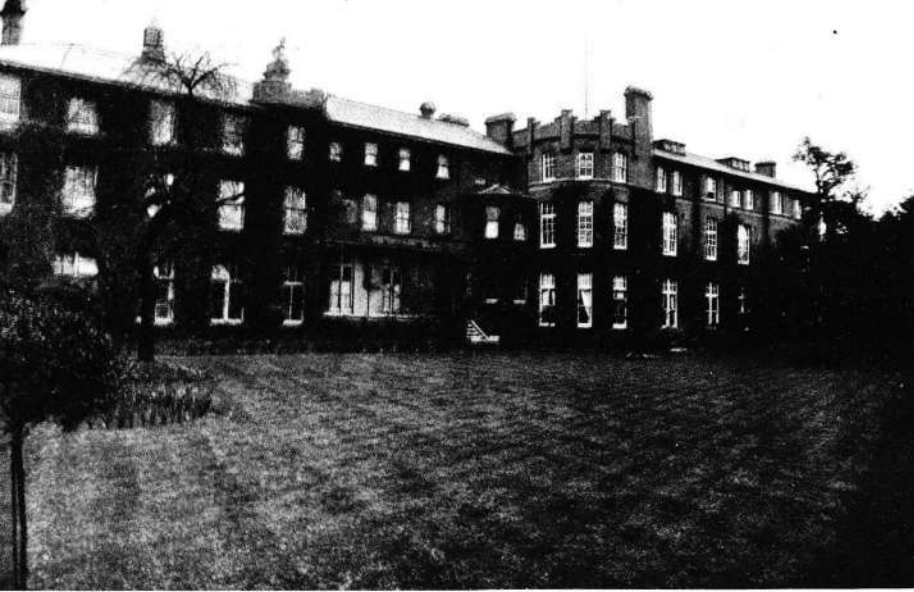


*The football  
team  
(1914)*



*The school  
play  
(1914)*





*Surrey house  
Battersea  
London*



*In school uniforme (1916)*



*School magazine cover (1925)*

The outcome of this letter was that Fr Candela made an Extraordinary Visitation of the Province from 21st of November 1939 until 17th of January 1940. In his report under the heading "Opposition to the Provincial" he wrote:

Here, it is appropriate to say a word about the movement which exists in the Province to obtain from the Superiors a Provincial of English nationality. This desire is certainly not just to-day's but in these last times it is much more developed and is asserted in a much stronger way. One group of confrères went so far as to interest the Apostolic Delegate to whom they presented a petition in the sense indicated above with about seventy signatures. The worst of it was that they were willing to motivate their petition with charges made against the administration of the existing Provincial, the Visitor who has had an interview with the Apostolic Delegate on this question was allowed to know the points of the argument.

Here they are:

For many years, we have been asking that they (the superiors) would show confidence in the English speaking confrères by appointing one of them as provincial. The present Provincial has already started his third term of six years. In the government of the Province the counsellors who are not Italian count for nothing, the ones who govern are an Italian triumvirate (Fr Tozzi, Fr Simonetti, Fr Franco). In the administration, the Provincial does everything himself; the Provincial Economist is nothing except a name. In some cases, contrary to the Constitutions, the Chapter is not held; the studies are not organised. For years there have been no personnel taking university degrees. The students of Theology especially do not have the quality of professors envisaged by Canon Law, and the professors who teach them do not have the necessary preparation.

It was not difficult for the Visitor to give these charges their true value and to bring up, on the contrary, the good merits of Fr Tozzi in his government of the Province.

However, his Excellency seemed inclined to council a change if there were a good English confrère who could take the place of Fr Tozzi. The same advice was given by his excellency Bishop Amigo, bishop of the

indispensabile e subito la tua presenza. È bene però che il cambio risulti, come lo è in effetto, voluto da noi e non imposto. Conviene pure che a Tozzi si tributino in modo tangibile quei segni di riconoscenza dovuti al suo grande lavoro ed eroico sacrificio. Fa capire che soprattutto in queste circostanze ci vuole la più stretta unione e la maggiore carità. Farai bene a sentire il Delegato: gli dirai che noi avevamo già prevenuti i desideri ecc. ecc. Bisogna poi stare attenti perché nulla cambi di tutto ciò che riguarda la vita e disciplina [...]. Tu vedrai se conviene che D. Tozzi e gli altri rimangano là oppure se sia meglio che vadano altrove. Certo D. Tozzi, D. Simonetti, D. Franco, D. Roffinella, D. Coppo ecc. potrebbero essere una vera Provvidenza per gli Stati Uniti. D. Simonetti forse potrebbe rimanere."

diocese who has suggested two names, Fr Couche and Fr O'Connor (rector of Burwash).

The thought of the Visitor is that it would be better without much delay to come to meet their desire, strong within the Province to have an English Provincial. To wait again would be to make the situation worse. The war and the rather uncordial relations between England and Italy would counsel it. It is worth noting that dearest Fr Tozzi has suffered and is suffering much from this situation. Many find him always more strict, quite unfatherly and totalitarian. Several ridicule his conferences. The trouble is real and it seems to the Visitor that it is going to grow unless it is remedied in the sense indicated. One incident which contributed to making the situation more acute happened at the end of last scholastic year. I wish to make a note on the conference which Fr McElligott, then a Professor at the studentate of theology at Blaisdon thought he ought to give to the clerics during one of his hours of class, giving an account of what he had said and done on the occasion of the General Chapter at which he was the Provincial delegate, with the purpose of obtaining from the Superiors the nomination of an English Provincial...

The trouble created by this state of affairs was so evident and the criticisms so general that the visitor thought he should deal with it in a letter which he left at his departure for each Rector to communicate to the confreres.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> ACS. S.3124 Inghilterra. Visita Straordinaria D. Candela 1939-40: "Opposizione all'Ispettore. Conviene dire qui una parola del movimento che esiste nell'Ispettorato tendente ad ottenere dai Superiori un Ispettore di nazionalità inglese. Questo desiderio non è certo di oggi, ma in questi ultimi tempi si è sviluppato assai e si è affermato in un modo più forte. Un gruppo di confratelli è giunto persino ad interessarne il Delegato Apostolico, al quale fu presentata una supplica nel senso indicato e che portava, pare, una settantina di firme. Il peggio è che si volle motivare tale supplica, con addebiti (sic) fatti alla gestione dell'Ispettore attuale. Il Visitatore che ebbe, con S. Eccellenza il Delegato Apostolico, un colloquio su detta questione, poté conoscere i punti della motivazione. Eccoli: Da molti anni domandiamo che si faccia fiducia ai confratelli di lingua inglese, nominando a Ispettore uno di essi; l'Ispettore attuale ha già incominciato il suo 3° periodo di 6 anni. — Nel governo dell'Ispettorato contano poco i Consiglieri che non sono italiani: chi governa è un triumvirato italiano (D. Tozzi, D. Franco, D. Simonetti). — Nell'amministrazione, l'Ispettore fa tutto; l'Economista ispettoriale non lo è che di nome. — In alcune Case, contrariamente alle Costituzioni non vi è il Capitolo. — Gli Studi non sono organizzati: da anni non si è pensato a pigliare i diplomi universitari [...] Gli Studentati specie quello di Teologia non hanno il quadro di professori che prevede il Diritto ed i professori che insegnano non hanno la preparazione necessaria. Non fu difficile al Visitatore dare a questi addebiti (sic) il loro vero valore e rilevare, al contrario, le benemeritenze di D. Tozzi nel suo governo dell'Ispettorato. Comunque, Sua Eccellenza sembrava inclinata a consigliare un cambiamento, se vi era un buon confratello inglese che potesse prendere il posto di D. Tozzi. Lo stesso consiglio diede Sua Ecc. Mons. Amigo, Vescovo diocesano, il quale fece anzi due nomi: Fr Couche e Fr O'Connor, (direttore di Burwash) [...]. Il pensiero pure del Visitatore è che converrebbe, senza indugiare molto, venire incontro al desiderio, forte nella Provincia, di avere un Ispettore inglese. Aspettare ancora sarebbe peggiorare la situazione. La guerra ed i rapporti poco cordiali tra l'Inghilterra e l'Italia, lo consigliano. Conviene aggiungere che il

In his letter dated 17th Jan. 1940, Fr Candela announced his willingness to communicate the desires of the confrères to the Rector Major and at the same time maintaining that there was no ill will involved.

To the Confrères:

I am not giving any secrets away in speaking to you of the feeling I have found in the Province concerning the appointment of a Provincial of your own nationality. As this question has been carried very far and many words spoken and perhaps too many...

If they (the Superiors) have sent Italian confrères to this Province it has been with the best of intentions, to help your Province in its solid Salesian formation. I earnestly hope that no one among you will do the Superiors the injustice of attributing to the Superiors even in the vaguest way any other intention...<sup>42</sup>

Early in 1940, Fr Frederick Couche, Fr Tozzi's secretary, was summoned to Turin where he was appointed as the new English Provincial and Fr Tozzi moved to the United States just before Italy entered the war.

While accepting Fr Candela's claims of good intentions the extent to which the intervention of the Apostolic Delegate actually prompted the change is fairly obvious, without it there would probably have been no change till the war forced it upon them. What can be said with a real degree of certainty is that after this event it was impossible for the Superiors to again appoint an Italian Provincial in England, a position to which Fr Rua had been very sensitive fifty years before, which was not true in the United States or Australia. The responsibility for maintaining the Salesian Tradition and developing it had to lie squarely on the shoulders of the native Salesians. This involved both gains and losses. On the one hand, the entry of Italy to the war made such change inevitable. On the other, it was not long before most of the Italian Salesians in England were either interned or deported or had left for America, among them some very talented young men.

caro D. Tozzi ha sofferto molto e soffre molto di tale situazione. Parecchi lo trovano sempre più esigente, poco paterno, totalitario. Alcuni ridicolizzano (sic) le sue conferenze. Il disagio è reale e pare al Visitatore che andrebbe accrescendosi se non si rimediasse nel senso indicato. Un incidente contribuì a renderlo più acuto, verso la fine del Corso scolastico ultimo. Voglio accennare ad una conferenza che D. McElligott, allora professore nello Studentato teologico di Blaisdon, credette di dover fare ai chierici, nell'ora di una delle sue classi, dando loro conto di quanto aveva fatto e detto a Torino, in occasione del Capitolo Generale, al quale era stato delegato dal Capitolo ispettoriale, collo scopo di ottenere dai Superiori la nomina di un Ispettore inglese [...]. Il disagio creato da questo stato di cose era così patente, i commenti e le critiche tanto generali che il Visitatore credette doverne parlare in una lettera che, alla sua partenza, lasciò perché fosse, dai singoli Direttori, comunicata ai confratelli."

<sup>42</sup> S.3124 Inghilterra. (17 Jan 1940) Letter of Fr Candela to the Confreres.



From the point of view of the Church in England, this incident may cast some light on the new Apostolic Delegate's difficulties in England.

One feature of his position, namely the fact that he was not welcomed very enthusiastically by the English Bishops, apart from Amigo, may well have made him more willing to intervene in this relatively minor problem in order to prove his own usefulness. The disagreement was significant for the Salesians but also provided an unsought opportunity for establishing the position of the Apostolic Delegate on the English Catholic scene.

## **CONCLUSION: THE DYNAMICS OF GROWTH**

As long as we remain in London and its outskirts with colleges similar to those of the diocese and other congregations or lay people we will continue to vegetate. (Fr Scaloni, 16 Nov. 1921)

### **The original ferment**

The dynamics of growth of the Salesians in England are amply illustrated in what has gone before. The aim of this conclusion is only to highlight some of the most significant points in that process.

The first impetus for a Salesian foundation in England came from that 'original ferment' that took place at Valdocco in the mind and heart of St. Dominic Savio under the influence of Don Bosco and Laurence Gastaldi, at that time, a Rosminian missionary in England. Dominic's young heart was fired by the desire to share in bringing about that triumph for the Catholic Church which he envisaged God was preparing among in England for the people he saw blundering about in the fog. Dominic's day-dream marks the traditional starting point of the Salesian interest in an English foundation.

In fact though, the actual working out of that dream involved a much more prosaic process of trial and error and more evidently flawed human beings such as Georgiana de Stacpoole, Tobias Kirby and even some litigation with John Butt, bishop of Southwark.

Yet, even in these unlikely surroundings, the original Salesian vision seemed to inspire both the young Francis Bourne and Henri Galeran, two diocesan priests, working in South London. They were both convinced that the young people of 'this immense Babylon' needed missionaries of their own.

The reality of life in darkest Battersea, however, put to the test all the youthful idealism which Fr Edward McKiernan and his pioneering group could manage. Struggling against poverty and destitution, misunderstanding and ill-health, his life and perhaps still more his premature death proved to be the foundation stone for the building of a strongly rooted Salesian presence among Battersea's Catholic poor.

### **Expansion**

Under the skilled guidance of Fr Juvenal Bonavia, the work of preparing youngsters, sons of the poor, for the priesthood began, no doubt



inspired by the sacrificial death of the founder. The work prospered and the completion of the new Sacred Heart Church and the opening of Surrey Lodge as the College premises, gave a marked impetus to the process of expansion.

With the passing of Fr Bonavia, some of the underlying problems which were still unsolved began to show themselves. The parish and Elementary school soon became little more than a side show to the ever expanding 'middle class school for boys' developing at Surrey House. The advent of Fr J. McCourt and some other English trained teachers meant the introduction of widespread corporal punishment, and an educational style dominated by public examinations in every class in the school. The situation of the coadjutor brothers, who felt themselves to be little more than domestic servants, worsened in this period when their teaching of traditional crafts e.g. tailoring, shoemaking and printing were considered inferior and only an appendix to the main work of secondary education. All these facts indicated a fading of any very clear sense of Salesian identity among the English Salesians.

### **Stabilisation and the crisis of growth**

This tendency was exacerbated by the impact Fr Macey made as Rector. Very much the gentleman priest, always elegantly dressed, he tended to leave the detailed direction and supervision to others. His favouritism and lack of direction and vigour, meant that disorders were allowed to develop at Battersea. Perhaps his greatest weakness was an inability to allow the young men who had joined him as boys to grow up. He seemed to want to keep them at Battersea around him rather than encouraging them to go out and work for poor and abandoned youngsters elsewhere. The resulting claustrophobic atmosphere at Battersea almost inevitably, became unhealthy.

Fr Virion's visitation report highlighted the need for a change of Superior if the process of stabilisation was not to become terminal. The fact that it took Fr Scaloni until 1919 to effectively take charge and initiate some real change was not just a question of his inevitable absences, but also due to the influence of Fr Macey which was still paramount.

### **Renewed vision**

With the arrival of the superbly qualified Fr Angelo Franco and his great co-worker, Fr Joseph Ciantar, the stage was set for a renewal of the vocations aspect of the Salesian work. They hoped to prepare students not just to work for the young in Britain and Ireland but to prepare Missionaries ready to go to India and South America.

However, despite the new Italian broom, the old independent English

tradition of Fr Macey survived not only at Chertsey, but also in a much more vibrant form in Ireland under the capable direction of Fr Aloysius Sutherland. Almost single-handedly and certainly quite independently he founded the agricultural colleges at Pallaskenry, near Limerick and Warrenstown in Co. Meath. His whole outlook owed more to Fr Macey's 'grand manner' than to the familiar 'family spirit of Don Bosco'. Both traditions were allowed to coexist peacefully while Fr Scaloni was alive, but after his death, with the appointment of Fr Tozzi, who would tolerate no independent spirit, conflict was inevitable.

### International conflict

As war with Italy became more and more likely, differences of outlook became identified with national feeling. Fr Tozzi's rather irascible temperament and his forceful management style soon became identified with Mussolini's fascism. British and Irish pig-headedness was seen as nothing less than betrayal of Don Bosco and the Society. Ultimately, there was an appeal to the Apostolic Delegate and the appointment of Fr Frederick Couche, on the one hand, Fr Tozzi's utterly devoted secretary, and yet the great devotee of the practice of seniority, a very uncharacteristic Salesian practice.

The factors which promote growth, then, would seem to be two-fold. A process of genuine renewal required and requires both a return to the sources of inspiration, in this case Don Bosco's spirit, but also a suitable adaptation to the needs of the time and place, an *aggiornamento*. The nearest that this would seem to have come to being realised in the history of the Province was in the personal vision and practice of Fr Franco and Fr Scaloni. They can offer some lessons to those looking for the key to renewed growth and vitality to-day. On the one hand, where too much emphasis was put on the adaptation, the result was almost total absorption by the prevailing secular and religious culture, with a consequent loss of identity and ultimately decay. On the other, where the emphasis veered towards an exclusive concentration on the tradition viewed uncritically, then the result was alienation from any new culture and a chronic inability to communicate with new generations or a new age.



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