

The History of St Anne's catholic church, Terrace Road, Buxton

In 2011, the Catholic Parish Church of Saint Anne in Buxton celebrated its 150th anniversary. However, the parish itself dates back to medieval times. Until the Reformation the parish was centred at the Well Chapel, near to the Crescent. This was closed in 1538 by Thomas Cromwell. Until the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829,(See note below) Catholics could not build churches for public celebrations. The few remaining Catholics in the area met in various private houses on Spring Gardens, West Road and High Street.

In the twenty years between 1850 and 1870 the number of parishioners grew from sixty to over two hundred. Most of the new parishioners were Irish immigrants who came to work, first on the building of the railway, and later arrivals (mostly women) to be employed in the hotel trade. The arrival of the railway helped Buxton to grow as a tourist venue.

In 1852, as a temporary measure, a chapel was opened on Scarsdale Place. By 1860 there was felt to be a need for a more substantial church building and work began on the present day church on Terrace Road. The foundation stone was laid by Bishop Roskell, who returned on 16th July 1861, accompanied by the future Cardinal Manning, to open the building. The most prominent Catholic family in the area, the Grimshaws from Errwood Hall, helped to fund the building of the new church. The first parish priest for the new church, appointed in 1850, was Father Edward McGreevey. Before then Mass had been celebrated by visiting priests including Fr. O'Farrell from Leek, and Fr. Collins from New Mills.

Over time, due to the increasing population, it was felt that there would be sufficient demand for children to have a Catholic education. Father Hoeben, Parish Priest in 1885, rented a room in the old Town Hall where a small school was opened, with a Mr and Mrs Gordon as teachers. Saint Anne's School moved to a new building in Hardwick Square in 1887, with Mrs Elizabeth Gordon as the head teacher. In 1891, the number of pupils averaged fifty-six and by 1903 the school had an average of one hundred and forty pupils. (Burton, Ivor, Education in Buxton Yesterday and Today page 6 unpublished paper Local studies Collection, Buxton Library) The teaching staff included three Sisters of the Presentation Order, from the convent on Livesey Street in Manchester. (Kelly's Directory 1904) This community of religious sisters opened their convent in Hardwick Square in 1898, where they remained until 2005. In 1972 the school was relocated to Lightwood Road. In 1959 a new Catholic Secondary School dedicated to Saint Thomas More was opened on Palace Fields. The first headmaster was Mr Barton. Both schools have worked along with the church to help the Catholic Community to take its place in the town.

The Parish Centre in the old school on Hardwick Square hosts a variety of activities, from dog-obedience classes, to bridge, to Parish Council meetings and Social evenings.

Saint Anne's, therefore, continues to be a lively community. The Eucharist is celebrated in our church: Saturday 5.00pm (in Polish), Saturday 7.00pm, Sunday 10.00am.

Note to History of St Anne. Comments = There is a small mistake in your history. It was the 1791 Second Catholic Relief Act which allowed Catholics to build public chapels, not the 1829 Emancipation Act. In 1778 the First Relief Act allowed Mass to be said in private chapels and no longer imposed an automatic life imprisonment sentence on Catholic priests in England; in 1791 the Second Relief Act allowed public chapels to be built. 1829 allowed Catholics to enter Parliament (both houses). Just thought you would like to have it right. (grateful thanks to Olive Barnes via email)