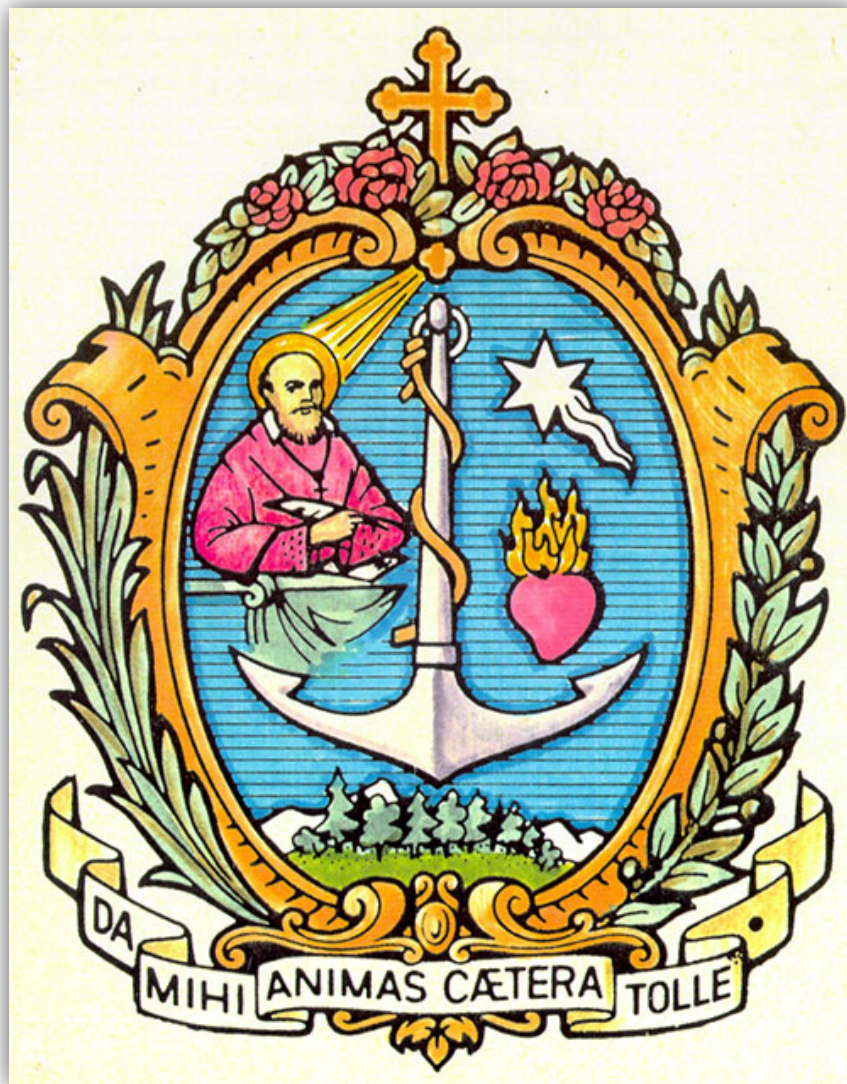




## The Salesians in Great Britain

### A History of the Province of St Thomas of Canterbury

*Fr John Dickson SDB*



*The Salesian Coat of Arms<sup>1</sup>*

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## **Originality and Social Impact**

In dealing with the special character of the Salesian work in Great Britain one has to be aware, as was Don Rua, that to implant the Salesian life and work here meant encountering a totally different culture and tradition to that of the Latin and largely Catholic culture of Italy, Spain or South America. England saw itself as Protestant and the predominant world power in the late 19th century. Almost as a corollary it saw Catholicism and Italian culture as both foreign and inferior. Cardinal Cagliero recounted that it was easier to engage with the Indians of Patagonia than with the street boys of Battersea who stoned this strange foreign cleric dressed in a long black robe when he came for the opening of the Sacred Heart Church in 1893.

Among the English Catholic community, the Salesians were late arrivals. They lacked the aristocratic credentials of the older religious orders in England like the Benedictines who could trace their lineage back to St Augustine of Canterbury and the Conversion of England, or the heroic martyr tradition of the English Jesuits with their famous public schools that had prepared the Catholic elite for 300 years. The older orders were different from the Salesians not only in their traditions but also because of their superb educational preparation in terms of university studies and historic libraries. Likewise, the diocesan clergy with their famous colleges, such as Ushaw, St Edmund's Ware and Oscott, had a university style preparation which, with a few notable exceptions, the English Salesians could not match until after the 2nd Vatican Council.

Having said all that, it is clear that over the 100 years of their work in the English Province the Salesians have always educated the children of the urban Catholic poor in their schools with practically none of the resources of money or highly educated manpower available to other orders. They have also, at various times and in different geographical contexts, tried with varied degrees of success to work for children in difficulty: homeless orphans, juvenile delinquents, and disaffected youth.

One of the most significant features has been the undoubted contribution that the Province has made to the Salesian Missions in Africa, (South Africa, Swaziland, Lesotho, and Liberia) India, China and South America. Don Bosco's original dream of England supplying English-speaking missionaries for the world was, to some degree, realised.

In terms of pastoral work the Salesians in Great Britain have not been able to import the classic Salesian institutions, the Oratory (youth club/youth parish) or the Trade School,

(except in Malta and Cape Town). Instead they focussed on trying to provide Catholic secondary schools (day and boarding) for the aspiring working class and homes/hostels/residential schools for children at risk. They have also worked in parishes, both our own and at the service of the diocesan parishes nearby and as military chaplains.

### **Title of the Province**

The use of the term 'Great Britain' in the name of the Province was only introduced after the twenty-first General Chapter (1978) in response to the sensitivity of Fr Martin McPake, a Scot, who was a delegate at the Chapter and later elected as 'Regional' for the English speaking region. The term 'Great Britain' instead of Inghilterra (England) appeared in the new style 'Elenco Generale' in 1980. Inghilterra had previously been the title used for the whole Province including Ireland and Scotland, Malta and South Africa and even the Falkland Islands and St Helena.

Undoubtedly Great Britain is the more correct title for the Province which now includes only England and Scotland and not Northern Ireland, yet it still sounds a little old fashioned when current usages in most other contexts prefers to speak of the United Kingdom, which however does include Northern Ireland.

### **Origins and Foundation**

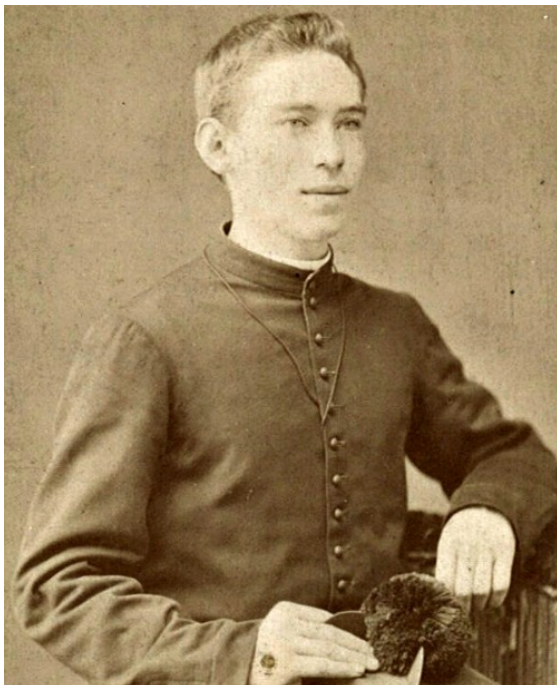
The origins of the Salesian presence in England dates back to the 1850's with the dream of Dominic Savio which illustrates the vivid impression that reports of the so called 'Second Spring' of the Catholic Church in England had made in contemporary Piedmont. At a political level, the perception of Camillo Benso di Cavour, architect of Italian Unity, was that the expulsion of Austria from Italy and the aggrandisement of Piedmont were dependent on both the British Government's good will and finance from the London Stock Exchange.

Don Bosco's own connection with the English scene was personal, almost familial, in that his friend Canon (later archbishop) Laurence Gastaldi, who had joined the Rosminians and worked in England, preached the retreats at the Oratory while Dominic Savio was there. Dominic's youthful dream of a mission to England took 30 years to realise.

In the meantime, Don Bosco's missionary dreams had made him aware of the importance of English speaking missionaries and he developed his contact with Archbishop Tobias Kirby, the Rector of the Irish College and agent of Cardinal Cullen, the Archbishop of Dublin. Cullen's concern for the Irish Diaspora had led to his working on Roman opinion for the

appointment of Irish bishops all over the English-speaking world. Don Bosco's contact with the Irish College led a group of young Irish students for the priesthood to come to Turin (not without incident) and to become Salesians. Among them was Francis Donnellan whose letters home provide a rich source for a contemporary view of the Oratory at Turin seen through Irish eyes. Another of this group was Fr Edward McKiernan who became the first Rector of the Salesians at Battersea.

The foundation at Battersea came via the success of Don Bosco as an international figure in France and in Roman society. The Countess Georgiana de Stacpoole, a notable benefactor of the Salesians in Paris and a believer in direct involvement among the poor of London, invited Don Bosco to take over a parish she had founded in West Battersea, having been disappointed by the response of the diocese to her foundation. A determined old aristocrat, who had been involved in Pius IX's escape from Rome during the Roman Republic of 1849, she was not to be put off by hierarchical sensibilities and pursued the matter with the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith which confirmed her offer. Fr F Dalmazzo was the first Salesian to set foot in England and though he was impressed the vastness of Clapham Junction railway station, couldn't abide the climate or the food, despite the kind welcome he received from Fr Galeran, a neighbouring priest who took him in.



The first group led by Fr Edward McKiernan<sup>2</sup>, (pictured) with Fr Charles B Macey<sup>3</sup> and Bro Rossaro were welcomed by Fr Francis Bourne (later Bishop of Southwark and Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster) when they arrived on November 16, 1887. They set up house at 26 Trott Street Battersea, with the help of Mrs Pash, a widowed Irish washerwoman, in late 1887. Fr Macey succeeded as Rector after the sudden death of McKiernan from TB in December 1888.

Already at this early stage we can discern the problems that were to dog the early foundation, namely the grinding poverty of the local area and the difficulty of developing the characteristic Salesian works in such a setting. When they first attempted to set up a boys' club it was very quickly taken over by the men of the parish who had no recreational facilities at all.

The Elementary School built by the Countess became a focus for the education of the early Salesians as it offered them positions as teachers' assistants and then entry to the Catholic training college. As soon as they were ordained, however, they could no longer teach in elementary schools. This strengthened the tendency fostered by Fr Macey to see the ordained priests as being above the menial tasks of school teaching. Fr Macey always cultivated the style of a 'clerical gentleman', a model more familiar in the Church of England or the English diocesan clergy. His own background of being a convert Anglican and having spent time with the Benedictines, the most aristocratic of the English religious orders, and his extremely limited Salesian training meant that as the Rector of the first community he seems to have introduced traditions such as calling the clerics and coadjutor confreres, 'brothers' and giving them 'special antique-style religious names'. These combined with the poverty, isolation and insignificance of the social impact of the work to make the community hardly distinguishable from the diocesan clergy round about. The difficulty of transplanting a Salesian charism into what was a predominantly Protestant and often xenophobic culture was immense particularly when the animator was unsure of its significance himself.

### **Early Development**

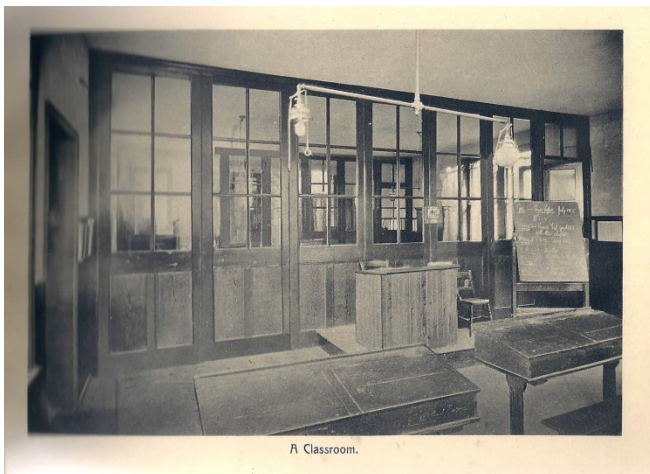
This period saw the growth of the Salesian presence in the south of England, the foundations in Cape Town (1897) and Malta (1903) and the beginnings in Ireland (1919). In the south of England houses were founded at Burwash in 1897, Farnborough in 1901, and Chertsey in 1902. These foundations came largely through the direct or indirect intervention of Bishop Francis Bourne who had met Don Bosco as a seminarian in France and who later as a young priest had formally requested from Rome permission to leave the diocese and enter the Salesians.

He arrived in Turin just as the first group was about to leave for London and was asked by Don Bosco to return to welcome them. Intriguingly, in his papers, he left a letter from Don Bosco with only the signature and the address intact; the contents had been painstakingly removed. Bourne's devotion to Don Bosco and the Salesians was never in doubt and he was able, as Archbishop of Southwark, to invite them to take over the Church and parish at Burwash in Sussex and at Chertsey in Surrey. One of his greatest friends was John Baptist Cahill, Bishop of Portsmouth, one of Bourne's important backers in his ascent to Westminster, and he was persuaded to offer the Salesians the parish in Farnborough.

Burwash became the novitiate house with the parish, Chertsey a Chaplaincy to the Salesian sisters and parish, and Farnborough began as a home and school for the orphans of military families. All these foundations survived but two more foundations in the Archdiocese of



Southwark, the parish of St Mary Magdalene, East Hill, Wandsworth near Battersea, which was opened in 1903 but later handed back to the diocese, and St George's Home for Boys, also taken over from the diocese in 1904, did not survive long term. The parish opened a small school for boys after the church was built but the site was too restricted and in 1922 the parish was handed back to the diocese. The St George's Home for boys had been started by Canon St John and moved into new premises in 1902 but, after an outbreak of meningitis in which two of the Salesians died, it was handed back to the diocese in 1907. The architect of the Salesian expansion was clearly Francis Bourne rather than Fr Macey. The failure of the project for a Home for Boys, tragically marked by the death of the two confreres, and the subsequent sickness and exit from the priesthood of Fr V Campana, the Rector, proved to be an ill omen for the future of this type of hostel work in the English Province. Attempts to develop hostels for difficult youngsters, outside school settings and in inner cities, have proved very difficult for the Salesians to sustain. Subsequent attempts in Soho in the 1930s and later in Glasgow at Tollcross in the 1970's both faltered and had to be abandoned.



*Above: A classroom and dormitory at Chertsey*

A glance at the figures of the growth of the Salesians in England in this period, however, show that between 1887 and 1907 there was a steady period of growth from 3 confreres in 1887 to 90 in 1907. This initial expansion was followed by a period of stability till 1921.

In the decade from 1890-1899 there were 23 first professions, in the following decade 1900-1909 there were 33 but from 1910-1919 there were only 20.

The Extraordinary visitation of 1908 and the appointment of Fr Scaloni as Provincial highlighted the peculiarities of Fr Macey's personal regime but they also highlighted a deeper crisis of growth.

Part of the problem was Macey's personal paternalistic style and the fact that he had been Superior for nearly 20 years. He found himself unable to let the younger Salesians grow up or take serious responsibility.

In Fr Scaloni who was also in charge of the houses in Belgium, the Superiors had found a very capable and dynamic leader. His controversy with the Belgian socialists had made him a national figure in Belgium and his responsibilities in England must have seemed, by contrast, somewhat parochial. In fact, during the First World War he was stranded in German-occupied Belgium so that Fr Macey effectively carried on as Superior at Battersea till the end of the war.

### **Interwar Expansion**

The post-war period saw an extraordinary expansion of the Salesians in the United Kingdom. The numbers rose dramatically from 80 Salesians in 1920 to 160 in 1925. Through Fr Sutherland's connections with the Irish Free State government and the coincidence of having Bishop Denis Hallinan, as Bishop of Limerick, the Salesians began the college at Pallaskenry in 1919. This was followed soon afterwards by the foundation at Warrenstown in County Meath. These agricultural colleges were to prove to be the main contribution that the Salesians were to make to agricultural education in the newly independent republic.

What the Salesians gained in moving to Ireland was entry to a rich source of potential vocations both for England and especially for the Missions. In parallel to the movement of expansion in Ireland were the new training houses at Cowley, Oxford, 1921, and later at Beckford, near Tewkesbury. The foundations at Bolton, Thornleigh College, in 1925, the foundation the Missionary College at Shrigley in 1929, and a School of Arts, Trades and Agriculture at Blaisdon in 1930 completed this expansive phase.

The expansion of secondary education for Catholic boys and a specialist centre for Orphans marked the shape of the Province for the future. Here the Salesians already had some experience and developed some expertise. Opening the house at Cowley led to the first students being sent to study at the University and the overall raising of the educational standards of the confreres. Behind the list of houses and expanding numbers were the extraordinarily dynamic combination of Fr Joe Ciantar, who was an extraordinary publicist of Don Bosco and toured Britain and Ireland developing a network of Salesian friends and co-operators and at the same time gathering recruits for the Salesian life, and Fr Angelo Franco



who shaped the candidates at Cowley and later at Shrigley into new model Salesians, much more deeply rooted in a living tradition of Salesian life.

Two crises halted this expansion. One was the sudden death of Fr Scaloni on Visitation in the Belgian Congo and the difficulty of filling his place. The other was the development of opposition to his successor, Fr Tozzi, who was perceived as rigidly Italian in an era of growing national tensions.

Fr Scaloni, whose monument in the garden at Cowley spoke volumes for the impact he made in the Province and his ability to inspire both the English and Irish Salesians, was succeeded by Fr Enea Tozzi, who had come to England as a young priest and then saved the work in Cape Town by his careful economy and mobilisation of the Catholic community. In England he managed to unite in opposition against himself the English, Irish and Scottish confreres who went so far as to complain to the newly created Apostolic Delegation. This resulted in a special visitation by Don Candela in 1939 and the subsequent transfer of Fr Tozzi to the USA.

Perhaps the greatest innovation of this period was the use of the media, public speaking, the press and film, to promote the Salesian work and its enormous success in encouraging popular support for the Salesian mission. Fr Ciantar's publicity campaign included speaking tours of Dublin, Belfast and Glasgow. Coupled with this was the success of setting up the basic structures necessary for the education of the Salesians themselves, a good investment for an order embarking on running boys' grammar schools.

### **Wartime Crisis**

The war involved the effective shutting down of the programme of publicity and the radical restructuring of the Formation houses. Schools were being evacuated and seminaries were in danger of attracting the unwelcome attention of the military authorities looking for billets, recruiting students as soldiers or simply occupying property for the duration. The new Provincial, Fr Couche, moved quickly to safeguard the situation. The School at Battersea was evacuated en masse to Cowley, ending forever its premier function as a training house for young confreres. Burwash was already a small boarding school and the junior classes from Shrigley were moved to Beckford.

Blaisdon became the Theology house as well as the Trade school. Battersea was almost a ghost house, with a skeleton community maintaining the parish and with a few students at the University.

As a result of this crisis a new novitiate and junior seminary was started in Ireland at Ballinakill County Laois and this ultimately prepared the way for setting up an independent Irish Province.



*Salesians in 1939*

In England the departure of Fr Tozzi was the preface to the internment of some Italian confreres on the Isle of Man and the departure of others for Canada. The disruption of the programme of studies and the loss of momentum which wartime necessities involved had a considerable effect on the Province. Fr Couche's leadership was careful but timid with a tendency to focus on internal problems. In retrospect it probably lacked very much dynamic vision for the future.

### **Postwar Growth**

In the wings stood Fr Thomas Hall. A convert to Catholicism, he brought his training at art school, a considerable eloquence and a capacity to make influential friends with people like Philip Tilden, the architect of Shrigley Church, Lady Bovey-Tracey at Blaisdon and the Lomas family at Shrigley. All of this made him a welcome alternative to the previous Provincial. Fr Hall, during his 12 years in office, supervised a considerable programme of rebuilding in the Province, including the new school buildings at Bolton and Farnborough and the new hall at

Chertsey, as well as opening an international centre for theological studies at Melchet Court, near Romsey.

This put a considerable strain on the Province's finances and necessitated his successor engaging in a major programme of seeking financial aid from friends and benefactors and summoning funds from the Irish houses.

In turn, this put strain on the traditionally difficult relationship between Irish and English Salesians and led ultimately to the separation of Ireland and South Africa from the English Province in 1969. Malta's position in the English part of the Province became increasingly anachronistic and they became a delegation of the Irish Province in 1980. South Africa became a separate Visitatoria in 1988.

At another level Fr Hall tried to rebuild the Province by promoting a programme of university education for the younger confreres, encouraging them to read for external degrees from London University via the infamous Wolsey Hall courses, usually while they were teaching and looking after dormitories. While this undoubtedly promoted the intellectual level of the Province and allowed the Salesians to operate two direct-grant grammar schools at Bolton and Battersea, it put extra pressure on the confreres themselves and tended to make them feel inferior to their lay colleagues on the staff who had attended university.

At the same time a small number of confreres were encouraged to study for higher degrees, mainly in theology and philosophy. There was sometimes a perception that these were privileged or favoured and therefore the others sometimes resented them. When, in the changes that followed Vatican II, many of them left the society, a certain suspicion of so-called intellectuals developed in some sections of the Province.

### **Development after Vatican II**

The 1960's in Britain marked a watershed in popular culture and a radical change in the nature of the Catholic community in the UK. Free secondary education, which had been the result of the Butler 1944 Education Act, promoted the development of the Catholic grammar school. With their existing foundations the Salesians were in a good position to receive state scholarships and to expand their schools. What followed was the development of grant-aided, free university education, which meant that grammar school pupils could

expect to proceed to the expanded universities often for the first time in their families' history. The Salesian schools became part of a major engine of social promotion for the Catholic working class especially at Battersea and Bolton, the two direct-grant grammar schools.

This presented both a challenge and opportunity to the Salesians themselves. With the growth of opportunities and freedom for their pupils the restrictions of a certain style of community life became more irksome. Where the power of the keys clung very tightly to the bursar's belt, where obedience to the minutiae of the daily horarium and 24 hour direct supervision of the youngsters became an all pervading preoccupation, this sometimes led to a crippling and infantile atmosphere in communities and was sometimes deeply resented. As a result of this and the new spirit blowing through the Church a significant number of confreres resigned and were dispensed from the Society including one retired Provincial. This was a heavy blow to the confidence of those that remained.

The Swinging Sixties were antithetical to the rigidity of this form of life. The junior seminary at Shrigley, while it was full at the start of the period, began a gradual decline as the confidence of Catholic parents in such boarding situations faded and the alternative opportunities for free secondary education increased.

When the Church at Vatican II began to move, the reverberations were felt as earth shattering in local communities where there had often been complete rigidity and a fear of asking questions.

On the positive side, in 1964 a new scientific and technical grammar school was opened at Bootle in Merseyside staffed by some highly qualified and well prepared Salesians. As part of the Salesian response to the second Vatican Council, the adoption of 'Dialogue' as a model for religious discernment promoted a new culture more open to the signs of the times.

What hit the whole educational effort of the Salesians in the 1970's and plunged them into a completely different scale of operations, if not a crisis, was the Labour government's introduction of Comprehensive education. Small boys' selective grammar schools of a couple of hundred pupils were suddenly confronted with massive expansion programmes rising to 1000 pupils involving at the same time the end of selection, the introduction of girls

and the raising of the school leaving age. Where Salesian head teachers saw this an opportunity and seized it, the mission of Don Bosco to poor and abandoned youngsters was suddenly and often uncomfortably and unwillingly discovered, sitting in the desks in front of them. The difficulty of inspiring the loyalty and affection of lay staff (often from schools absorbed by the Salesians) or used to different styles of teaching, and of pupils often compelled to stay on an extra year at school, fell on the shoulders of fewer and fewer active Salesians. Despite this, what has emerged, as evidenced in the Ofsted reports is a vibrant, successful and active network of schools, more conscious of a specifically Salesian identity, led by teams of lay men and women who have identified with the Salesian charism and ethos.

In the area of youth work outside main steam schools, the closure of Aberdour, a list D approved school in Scotland, and Blaisdon, a school for maladjusted boys in Gloucester, moved the Province to search for other ways to reach the young and the poor outside the school system. A courageous attempt was made to enter parish ministry, with a distinctively Salesian ethos and the expertise of trained social workers, at St Paul's Muirhouse, a deprived area of Edinburgh, at St Benedict's and later St Clare's in Easterhouse near Glasgow, as well at St Dominic's Huyton and St James's Bootle. These parishes often tried to model new approaches to pastoral service of the poor (open door policies) and distinctive youth work projects and building up lay leadership groups. As in schools, the aging population of Salesians has meant that some of these parishes have had to be handed back to the diocese.

Another feature of the period was a renewed attempt to be involved in the Salesian 'Mission Africa' sponsored after the Special General Chapter by Fr Vignano. The mission allotted to the Province was that of Liberia in West Africa. Despite its predominantly American Baptist tradition and its political instability the Salesian work developed in some very original ways, in the Arthur Barclay Technical School, originally a post-school technical college preparing secretaries and tradesmen, and in St Joseph's parish just next to the University. Very quickly the political instability that dogged all of Africa broke into a violent civil war. The technical school was wrecked and the Salesians forced to leave. The massacre at the Lutheran church close to the technical school showed the brutality that could easily erupt.

The Salesians realised their dream for a more open style of youth work by developing the Youth Centre at Matadi and from this experience in a besieged capital city developed Don Bosco Homes, an extremely creative and flexible attempt to reach street children and ex-

child soldiers through hostels, youth recreational programmes, 'junior councillors' in schools and a network of football teams, all trying to reach children who had become the victims of a dysfunctional society. Despite three bouts of looting and mayhem in the city and the problems of finding external sources of finance the work has developed and been taken on by Liberian lay staff.



*Saleians in Liberia<sup>4</sup>*

The period after Vatican II presents the writer with something of an irreconcilable contrast. On the one hand the numbers and age of the professed Salesians has declined so that the Province has now only just over 100 professed members with an average age of over 65. At the same time there have never been more children in Salesian schools (5000) and we have never had such a rich variety of projects for poor and underprivileged young people.

Clearly care of the elderly and sick has had to take a new priority. The opening of St Joseph's at Bolton (1998) and Don Bosco house at Farnborough (1999) were aimed at addressing these needs, offering specialist facilities and trained care staff.

The process of change has been specifically addressed by the Province through a planning process, which aims to carefully use the scarce resources of personnel property and finance to serve the mission of the Province. This process has involved an effort to rationalise our property, moving out of Surrey House at Battersea into some refurbished houses on Orbel St, and moving from Highfield House at Chertsey to the convent on Eastworth Rd and then to the purpose built new house at Salesian Gardens (2000). It has also involved the refurbishment of the community accommodation at Farnborough and Bolton and Bootle.

## Recent Developments

One of the features of the Province that has not previously featured in this account is the work of the Youth Retreat Centre at Savio House, Bollington. Originally Ingersley Hall was a smallish Country House, built in the 1750s by the Gaskell family which eventually came to the Lomas family. It was handed over to the Salesians in 1952 and started life as a House of Studies for post-novices studying Philosophy. When the students moved back to Beckford, Bollington became a publications centre and a not much loved centre for training lay brothers, as was summed up in one famous oft quoted comment: 'a cemetery with lights on'.

In the aftermath of the Vatican Council, the idea of developing a Salesian Spirituality Centre, similar to the centres being redeveloped by the Jesuits where the distinctive charism of the Salesians could be experienced in residential retreats gave new life to Savio House.

Building up an expert Salesian team that could offer such an input and finding audiences that were willing to pay for it was always a struggle. What has emerged is a successful youth retreat centre, directed by Salesians and groups of Young Volunteers who increasingly started taking a gap year between School and University while sharing community life with the Salesians. The facilities have been gradually redeveloped and now serve young people from a wide area of the North West region.



## Battersea

At Battersea, the difficulties of running a small, single sex comprehensive school in an increasingly competitive situation, and the reduction of direct engagement of the increasingly aged community in the work of the school meant that various attempts were made to re-envisage our presence there.



The Sacred Heart parish had effectively become a separate community and when the Primary School moved to new premises nearer Clapham Junction, the parish found itself with a large premises in need of repair and not much used. The possibilities of redevelopment began to be explored. The rediscovery of the De Stacpoole Trust, which had become moribund allowed the sale of the property and the building of the new Don Bosco Parish Centre on the opposite side of the Sacred Heart Church which was opened in February 2012.

A separate student community had been established in Orbel Street in 1991 but the remnants of the College community moved from Surrey House and were united in the Rinaldi community in August 1998, when it became obvious that sharing a building with a day school was not really any longer an option.

Setting up a separate Provincial Youth Office beside the Parish House was one attempt to revitalise the work there, though shortage of personnel made this short-lived. Developing Battersea as an international student house was approved by the Provincial Chapter and may well still become a new way forward for the community.

Redeveloping the Salesian College, as an academy had already been under discussion with the diocese when the Labour Government promoted its 'Building Schools for the Future Programme' of rebuilding all the country's secondary schools in 2009. This seemed like an opportunity that was too good to miss.

The plan that emerged was for the College to combine with John Paul II School near Wimbledon Common and to be rebuilt on the Battersea site. This project was consulted on and supported by Wandsworth Borough Council who saw it as a way of re-structuring and improving two small struggling Catholic Secondary schools. The process of School amalgamation was undertaken and a new Head appointed but when, with the arrival of the new Coalition Government the whole 'Building Schools for the Future' was cancelled, including our rebuild, the whole project seemed to be fatally undermined. By that stage, the new St John Bosco College was already due to open on the Wimbledon site in September 2011, whereupon the new Head resigned and the whole project moved into crisis mode. With outstanding help from the Head of the Salesian School, Chertsey, a new Headteacher was appointed, the amalgamation of the staffs was achieved and the Wimbledon site

received a facelift, so that the students could begin their education in September 2011 and the Sixth Form could open the following year.

In the meantime the Salesians and the Diocese, explored the possibility of using the capital receipts from the sale of the John Paul II site and part of the Salesian College site to finance a new build at Battersea without any help from central government.

*Pictured: demolition begins at Battersea.*

This scheme has also allowed the Salesians to develop their own plans for a new purpose built community house on the Surrey House site.



Negotiations with a large building company and the diocese led eventually to a successful outcome so that the building of the new College and community house is due to begin in January 2014 with completion due in September 2015.

Fr John Dickson SDB

2013

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The Salesian Coat of Arms appeared for the first time in a circular letter of Don Bosco's on 8th December 1885. The shining star, the large anchor, the heart on fire symbolize the theological virtues; the figure of St. Francis de Sales recalls the Patron of the Society; the small wood in the lower part reminds us of the Founder (Bosco is Italian for "wood"); the high mountains signify the heights of perfection towards which members strive; the interwoven palm and laurel that enfold the shield either side are emblematic of the prize reserved for a virtuous and sacrificial life. The motto *Da mihi animas, caetera tolle*, (*Give me souls, take away everything else*) expresses every Salesian's ideal.

<sup>2</sup> Fr Edward Patrick McKiernan was born on 10 November 1860, in Crabby, County Cavan, and entered the Oratory with Don Bosco in 1876. Ordained in October 1884, he was the first Irishman to become a Salesian, and the first Rector in England. He died on 30 December 1888, aged 27.

<sup>3</sup> Fr Charles Bernard Macey was born in Salisbury on 28 December 1854. His father was landlord of the Oddfellows' Arms. He went to work at gentlemen's outfitters at the age of 16. Though an Anglican, Charles began worshipping at a Catholic church and then converted. He was noticed by a fellow parishioner, Lady Herbert, who encouraged his vocation and seems to have suggested he go to Don Bosco in Turin. He joined the Oratory in 1880 and was the first Englishman to receive the cassock from Don Bosco. He was ordained priest shortly before setting off for England.

<sup>4</sup> Pictured: Fr Harry O'Brien, volunteer Steve Bradley, Fr Larry Gilmore, Br (now Fr) Blamoh Harris, Br Donald MacDonald, Br Joe Glackin and on the roof, Fr Joe Brown and Fr Michael O'Meara