

St George's Roman Catholic Church and Catholics in Worcester

1540: Henry VIII cathedral priory dissolved, shrines plundered and destroyed.

1553: Accession of Catholic Queen Mary - Parliament repealed anti-Catholic legislation

1558: Death of Mary, accession of Protestant Queen Elizabeth. Links with Church of Rome cut.

Marian priests continued to minister in the See of Worcester and were perceived as a threat to the Establishment (quote see p2 Doolan)

1577: John Whitgift became Bishop of Worcester. Compiled a list of recusants.

1590: Jesuit ministry begins in Worcester: Fr Edward Oldcorne comes to live at Hindlip – he is responsible for stationing priests in Worcestershire. Many hiding places at Hindlip the Bishop of Worcester says: "in that small circuit there are nine score of recusants of note (beside retainers, wanderers and secret lurkers)..."

1606: Hindlip house searched by 100 armed men, on the 8th day Fr Oldcorne and Garnet discovered. Finally executed at Worcester. Beatified in 1929.

1685: Catholic James II succeeds brother Charles II

Jesuits somehow had continued to minister in the area in spite of persecution, the first public chapel opened in Foregate St in 1686 on the corner of Pierpoint St. [This has been disputed, and the chapel was probably further north in Foregate Street]

1688: James II deposed and succeeded by William and Mary who revived some anti-Catholic laws.

The mob attack and wreck the chapel and Carmelite fathers flee, to return in 1690 and re-open it.

1720: Jesuits return from Evenlunch.

1741: A Mass House is shown in the Town Ditch on Doharty's map of the city, near the site of the present church, probably in the town house of Basil Bartlett of Hanley Castle.

1765: Building of a new chapel close to the site of the present church, Fr Bartlett (Basil's brother) writes discretely of a "new Shoppe" which is hidden by a shop and houses so that it must be approached via a passage. Dr Attwood donates £250 for a new presbytery

1791: Catholic Relief Act made Catholic Chapels legal if they were registered with the magistrates

1828: Catholic community, having gained in confidence and numbers need larger church

1829: New church to design of Henry Rowe is opened costing £3,454 3s 6d.

1837: Earl of Shrewsbury donates a copy of Raphael's 'Transfiguration' original was commissioned in 1517 and now hangs in the Vatican Gallery

1851: Investments from Attwood's £250 enabled building of 1 and 2 Sansome Place which was restored and refurbished in 1990

1878: Church enlarged by addition of sanctuary, side chapels, confessionals and sacristy, designed By SJ Nicholl of London. Altars and pulpit carved by William Forsyth

1887: Corinthian style façade of Bath stone replaced Doric predecessor

1906: Church re-decorated, two pillars removed inside chancel arch, skylight added to Lady Chapel

1984 – 88: Major restoration; sanctuary extended, pulpit moved, font relocated and altar rails removed

1990: Jesuits withdraw and parish becomes part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham

Schools:

1829: Rooms rented for a day school in Silver St

1834: School built behind presbytery for poor Catholic children

More schools were kept at Britannia Square and 2 Sansome Place as well as at the Lodge in the arboretum 1926 -9.

A school for boys was opened at Grove Villa in 1860, later moving to Littleton House until 1890. Elgar and his friend Hubert Leicester attended the latter.

Music:

1842 – 83: William Elgar (non-Catholic) who ran a music shop became organist. During the sermon he repaired to the Hop Market Hotel.

1873: Son, Edward Elgar becomes assistant organist at age of 14. Organist in 1885 – 1889, writing Many compositions for the choir.

People:

1765: Death of Dr Thomas Attwood (1679 – 1765), ? trained as MD at Utrecht in the Netherlands

"Of the four physicians on the original foundation, the senior was Thomas Attwood, but little is known about him except that he was a Roman Catholic, and was 63 years old at the time the infirmary was founded in 1745. He attended with great regularity until his retirement in 1757. According to Noake [Worcester in Olden Times 1849 p.71] , the Worcester Corporation had occasion in 1737, to borrow £1,000 from Dr Attwood at an enormous rate of interest. Dr Attwood therefore, if this is correct, had a good head for business, thus promising well for the infirmary." Attwood owned a good deal of property from which he derived 'numerous rents'.

"Dr Attwood retired this year [1757], after serving the infirmary as its first senior physician for eleven years. Besides attending meetings with great regularity. He was now aged seventy-five. He spent his retirement at Powick where he died in his eighty-third year, on 1st October 1765 [see Worcester Journal 3 Oct 1765]. Mrs Attwood survived for another four years."

His will is intriguing, for he leaves a considerable amounts of money to his wealthy Catholic friends (Hornyold, Berkley, Berington). However, all is made clear in a separate document of private instructions, where he stipulates that this money is intended to fund priests and mission work. This in order to hoodwink the authorities who would have taken action to prevent the bequests had they known of them.

1904: Hubert Leicester becomes first post-Reformation Catholic mayor of Worcester and is re-elected four times. A Civic Mass was held each year that he was Mayor.

1905: Leicester confers the Freedom of the City on Edward Elgar

Expansion:

1963: New school at Warndon includes a Mass Centre

1976: St Joseph's built