

# Our Parish Priests



## **Father Athanasius Fishwick 1891 - 1892**

Thursday, January 24th, 1918, was a raw, rainy winter's day, yet a great crowd of mourners heedless of the weather accompanied the funeral procession when the body of the Rev. Father Fishwick was borne through the streets of Cockermouth to its last resting place in the grave of his own choice, on the wooded slopes overlooking the Lakeland town.

Not only his own flock, but non-Catholics of all denominations including the ministers of religion and civic dignitaries of the

town and district, were assembled around the grave of one whose apostolic life had been a shining light in their midst.

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Father Fishwick was born in Liverpool in 1855, and at the age of twelve was sent to Ampleforth College. As a boy he did not exhibit anything extraordinary either at play or study, except those qualities of earnestness and patient perseverance which afterwards developed so finely when he began his missionary career. At the end of his collegiate career he entered the Benedictine Order, and received his habit at Belmont in 1875. After going through the usual course of philosophy and theology he returned to Ampleforth, where he made his Solemn Vows, and was elevated to the priesthood on February 24th, 1883. Two years afterwards he was sent on the Mission, firstly to St. Mary's, Warrington, for a short period, then to Brownedge near Preston. Here the first opportunity occurred to show the mould in which Father Fishwick's character was cast.

The idea of erecting Lostock Hall into an independent mission was maturing about this time and young though he was Father Fishwick was chosen by his Superior to commence the new mission. "Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly," In a short time a handsome new school chapel was erected and furnished fit for Divine service and the education of the Catholic school children. Father Fishwick's success was complete but at the cost of his health, which broke down under the strain.

He retired to Barton-on-Humber, but became a complete invalid, and was forced to rest for more than twelve months. In 1895 we find him once again at Warrington for a few months, when he was transferred to Workington in Cumberland, where he held the post of school manager until 1902.

In that year the lovely Lakeland mission of Cockermouth was handed over to the Benedictines by Dr. Collins, the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle, and Father Fishwick was appointed to the office of head priest of the mission. An article, written by the late Father Watmore, O.S.B., and illustrated by Father A. M. Powell, O.S.B. on the occasion of the celebration of the golden jubilee of St. Joseph's, Cockermouth, gives a description of the state of the mission when Father Fishwick first took charge.

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The article appeared in the *Ampleforth Journal* of December, 1906, The schools closed, the church and house in need of repairs, the congregation poor in number and poor in this world's possessions, it was the second great occasion when the dogged, earnest perseverance, the strong will, could put forth its strength and show the world what a mighty man is an earnest missionary at his work in the vineyard, not for himself but for the Master who has sent him. For fifteen years he laboured strenuously, firstly at the church, then at the schools which were re-opened in November 1904. Again turning his attention to the House of God he made considerable improvements year by year, and finally added to the beauty of the edifice.

Turning his attention to the spiritual and social condition of the people he introduced the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass at Keswick during the summer months, for the benefit of the Catholic visitors and the members of his scattered flock: He was also elected a member of the Cockermouth Board of Guardians, and held the office until his death, It was one of the non-Catholic members who at the time of his death said: " Father Fishwick was an inspiration to them all at Cockermouth on account of his blameless life and his fidelity to duty."

Two years ago the first symptoms of that fell disease from which he died began to manifest themselves. Father Fishwick disregarded these for a time, and only sought a cure when it was too late. It was in April 1917, the disease reached such a crisis that all the last rites of the Church were administered. There was every sign of impending dissolution, but the prayers of the school children and people which were offered up unceasingly seemed for the moment to prevail. Fr. Fishwick suddenly rallied in a wonderful manner. He went away in search of robust health and in two or three months thought he had regained it. He returned all too soon to his beloved parish, with his soul eager for work, but his body absolutely unfit. The result was a renewed attack of the disease and his saintly death on January 21st, 1918. May he rest in peace.

## **Father Adrian Beauvoisin 1892 - 1896**

Born in Sheffield, 10th October 1852. Educated at Ampleforth Clothed, 28th September 1871, and simply professed at Belmont for St Lawrence's, 2nd October 1872 ; solemnly professed at Ampleforth, 8th December 1875. Ordained in minor orders, 29th August 1875; sub-deacon, 24th February 1877; deacon, 18th November 1877; priest, 8th March 1879. Sent on the Mission to St Mary's, Warrington, 1882-83; St Anne's, Liverpool, 1883-86; Cleator, 1886-89; Coventry. 1889-91;

Merthyr Tydvil, 1891-93; Brownedge, 1893-96; Ampleforth, 1896; Brynmawr, 1897-1906, and died there.

## **Father Ambrose Turner 1896 – 1905 First Parish Priest of Our Lady & St Gerard,**

On 12th August 1896 Father Beauvoisin was succeeded by a prestonian Father Ambrose Turner, born on 30th January 1855. Educated at Ampleforth. Clothed, 3rd September 1873, and simply professed at Belmont for St Lawrence's, 5th September 1874. Solemnly professed at Ampleforth on 10th November 1877. Ordained in minor orders, 10th September 1876; sub-deacon, 18th November 1877;

Deacon, 18th September 1880; priest, 4th June 1881. Sent on his Mission to Woolton, 1891 ; St Alban's, Warrington, 1891-92; Workington, 1892-96.

He had the turret built on the school and from a ship called the "Adriatic" he bought a powerful bell. This he blessed and had erected in July 1899.

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On January 10th 1903, he left Browndedge to become our first resident priest. He lived first in Lupton Row (one of the houses on the east side of Leyland Road) with the rent at 4/6d per week. He later moved across the road to Victoria Terrace. The rental of this cottage was 5/9d. Parishioners gave him pieces of furniture but his one treasure was a harmonium.

Unfortunately Father Turner died on December 2nd 1905 at the age of 50. He had journeyed to Ampleforth for his annual retreat, caught a cold and died of pneumonia. In his obituary notice the Ampleforth Journal states "the good work he has done at Lostock Hall (or Tardy Gate as it is called) will we feel sure bear much fruit. He has laid the seed of a new mission which we trust will grow and increase a hundredfold. He has not permitted to see in this world the fruit of his labours but we may trust he will be amply rewarded in the next for his zeal and self-sacrifice. In October last he diminished the debt on the mission by means of a Bazaar which realised the handsome sum of £450.

The last effort over the bazaar seems to have told on his already weakened constitution".

## **Father Cuthbert Mercer 1906 - 1929**

From tangible evidence and from the memories of the older generation his successor was to have a profound influence not only on the parish but on Tardy Gate itself. Father Peter Cuthbert Mercer was a native of Preston and was 42 years old when he arrived here from Warrington.

The foundations of the Presbytery were laid in June 1906 and it was ready for occupation in December of that year. In 1910 when Saint Paulinus parish was nearly 20 years old, Father Mercer received the Abbot's permission to build a new church, to be dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes and Saint Gerard Majella.

## **Father Theodore Rylance 1929 - 1942**

Wilfrid Rylance was born on the 27th March 1874, and educated in the school here from 1887 to 1903, when he was admitted to the novitiate as Brother Theodore. Two younger brothers, the late Fr Romuald and Fr Cyril, who happily survived him, later became monks of Downside.

He was ordained in 1901. He was an exceptionally hard worker and a devoted teacher who spared no pains to get his classes on. One associates him with masses of 'gelatined' notes wherewith lie supplemented or replaced the textbooks, and with untiring vigour on the football field. He could be gay and humorous, but lie was always a shy man; and this, together with his grimly ascetic appearance, tended to make him seem unapproachable. He had in fact his full share of sociability, but he was infrequently able to gratify it.

However, he was a highly valued member of the community, which penetrated, as communities do, the phenomena and appreciated the real man underneath. In 1906 he was sent out to work in the parishes and was stationed successively at St Alban's and St Benedict's in Warrington, at St Mary's, Browndedge, St Anne's, Liverpool, and at Workington.

In 1925 he was put in charge at Abergavenny, and four years later at Lostock Hall. There he remained for thirteen years, finding much that was congenial in the firm hold on principle and strict fidelity to practice of unspoilt Lancashire. From his pulpit and in private he defended and promoted that spirit and vehemently rebuked any decline to lower standards. Consequently his people looked up to him with confidence and respect: but only those he had tended in distress really loved him: they had seen another and a different side

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of him.

In 1942 he was moved to Knaresborough and three years later to Lee House. He was tiring now, and the peace of the little parish gave him great contentment and ample opportunity for manual labour with pick and shovel. In 1956 his bodily weakness put an end to his active life and he had to accept the unwelcome role of invalid. He bore this patiently without self-pity, and died quietly on the 16th March 1958. By the desire of his late parishioners at Lostock Hall he was buried there. The large attendance at his funeral although it was sixteen years since he left the parish, showed how strong and lasting an impression he had made. May he rest in peace.



## **Father Gregory Swann 1942 - 1956**

Fr Gregory was born in 1887 at Merton in Surrey. An Anglican, he was educated at Lowestoft College and St Edmund's Hall, Oxford where he read for a degree in Chemistry. He was received into the Catholic Church in March 1909 entering the Ampleforth Community in 1911. He was ordained priest in 1919 and held a number of offices in the Community whilst teaching Science in the School. He was at various times sub Procurator (1914-1918), Master of Ceremonies (1919-27) and sub Novice Master (1923-27), as well as being in charge of the local Parish of Helmsley for eight years.

From 1927 until 1958 Fr Gregory served on the Ampleforth parishes. Serving at St Mary's Cardiff and St Anne's Liverpool he was also parish priest of Easingwold and Lostock Hall (where he remained for fourteen years) before coming to Parbold in 1956.

After only one year at Parbold Fr Gregory asked if he could return to the Abbey. Here he lived in retirement until his death, in York, on 31 March 1974. Fr Gregory will be remembered for his assiduous pursuit of the three L's – Latin, Liturgy and Laughter. Sometimes simultaneously!

## **Father Wilfrid MacKenzie 1956 - 1968**

Soon after his arrival in 1956 Father Mackenzie was faced with the daunting task of planning, the expansion of the school and fulfilling a wish to see the completion of the church. To use Father's own words "It was Father Mark Haidy who first told me how beautiful the church was at Lostock Hall, how right he was I said to myself when I came on a preliminary visit in Spring 1956.

Right from the beginning it was my wish to finish the church and in due time I wrote to Abbot Byrne to ask whether I might make initial investigations."

Father Mackenzie's wish was fulfilled and on Sunday 26th May 1963 the Rt, Rev. Basil Hume, OSB, Abbot of Ampleforth, (the future but now deceased Cardinal Hume) was in attendance for the Blessing of the Tower and extension.

In October 1968 he was appointed Parish Priest at Saint John's Easingwold where he was visited regularly by men of the parish.

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## **Father Charles Forbes 1968 - 1983**

Father Forbes made the short journey from Brownedge to become our Parish Priest in 1968.

Father Charles was born at Marlborough on May 1st 1921, and educated at Ampleforth College. He entered the community there in September 1939 and was ordained in 1949. During his studies he took a degree in History at Oxford. A meticulous Master of Ceremonies at the Abbey, Father Charles moved to Gilling Castle Preparatory School where he taught for three years before going to serve as a curate first at Workington and then at Bamber Bridge. He was made parish priest of Our Lady and St. Gerard, Lostock Hall, in 1968, and remained there until his sudden death from a heart attack on Tuesday 2nd August.

Father Charles did tremendous work with the SVP, as was witnessed by the presence of the National President at his funeral along with the President of the Central Council for Salford and Liverpool. He seldom missed a meeting of the Parish Conference of the SVP and played a full part in all the conference activities, becoming Spiritual Director of the District Council of the SVP and of the Central Council.

For many years he served as a member of the National Council SVP who gave him the task of promoting the cause of Frederick Ozanam. He was internationally known and respected, attending the international plenary meetings of the Society.

Father Charles was also very much involved with the Knights of St. Columba, and had it not been for his illness before his death, would have been present with them, on Pilgrimage in Lourdes, at the time of his death. It was most appropriate that Father Charles was parish priest of Our Lady of Lourdes parish, and that he would have been in Lourdes at the time of his death, as he had a very great devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes.

He had a friendly attitude and approach to people - especially to the sick elderly and disabled - his apostleship was giving his time - himself - to people. Arriving at Lostock Hall during the 2nd Vatican Council it fell to him to implement the Council's wishes in the parish which he did with great success as can be seen by the organisations and lay involvement left behind. All this was done with great precision, perhaps the precision due from a person whose great hobbies were the Railways of the country and the Cinema industry. His death leaves a great void in the parish of Lostock Hall and the Ampleforth community.

## **Father Justin Caldwell 1983 - 1984**

Father Justin joined us in October 1981 and soon found a place in our affection. He was scheduled for a move to Cardiff and was away on his holidays when Father Forbes died so suddenly. Father Justin has the sad and difficult task of caring for a parish which was still in shock. From November 1983 he did this as Parish Priest.

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It was the Bible study group who really got to know this very courteous and gentle priest. His was a short stay in the parish, a time of quiet consolidation, administration and preparation for Father Forbes permanent successor.



## **Father Rupert Everest 1984 - 1992**

Father Rupert became our Parish Priest in 1984 and celebrated our centenary with us. His previous appointments had included St Peters, Seal Street, Liverpool where he was known beyond the parish boundaries as a contributor to the "Catholic Pictorial".

Whilst at Saint Mary's Brownedge he succeeded in bringing the traffic to a halt on the A6 for a procession of the Blessed Sacrament from St. Benedict's School to Saint Mary's.

Father Rupert left us in 1993 and died in August 2013.  
R.I.P.

## **Father Gordon Beattie 1992 - 1999**

Father Gordon Beattie, from Scotland, joined us in 1992

A former Teacher, Hospital Chaplain, Prison Chaplain, Grammar and Secondary Schools Chaplain, he was also a Chaplain to the Royal Air Force serving in the Gulf during the Gulf War.

For over thirty years he has been the Editor of the Benedictine Yearbook, a Directory of all the Monks and Nuns who follow the Rule of Saint Benedict in the British Isles and their Overseas Foundations.

He has travelled over 50,000 miles visiting all but one of the Houses which appear in the Gazetteer Section of his Book Gregory's Angels.

He moved on to Parbold in September 1999 and still receives visits from past parishioners of Lostock Hall.



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## **Father Matthew Burns 1999 - 2003**



Father Matthew Burns M.A. DIP.ED joined us in September 1999 shortly after the departure of Father Gordon Beattie.

Father Matthew was our first Parish Priest not to live in the Presbytery but to reside with the other Monks at St Benedict's Monastery in Bamber Bridge.

During his time with us Father Matthew oversaw the refurbishment of our Narthex and in doing so helped create a new Piety Shop, refreshment area, meeting room and toilets.

Father Matthew moved back to Ampleforth in August 2003 and died on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

## **Father Xavier Ho 2003 - 2019**

Father Xavier Ho, R.G.N. joins us on 22nd August 2003 from the Monastery of Our Lady of Mount Grace, Osmotherley, Northallerton in North Yorkshire.

Father Ho fled Vietnam by boat in 1979 and was rescued by a British Oil tanker finally arriving in England in November of that year.

He arrived at Ampleforth as a layman in 1980 studied further in Newcastle and trained as an R.G.N. in Bristol. He received the habit at Ampleforth in 1990 and was ordained a Priest in June 1998 arriving at Osmotherley in August the same year.



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## Assistant Priests

### Father Maurus Care 1902

Father Maurus Carew was in the parish for a very short time. Ill health compelled his departure.

### Father Roger Lightbound 1968

Father Lightbound came for a short time to help in the parish in 1968.

Never happier than when administering the sacraments or visiting people in their homes, as he did this he brought the parish register up to date.

He died in Liverpool in 1969.

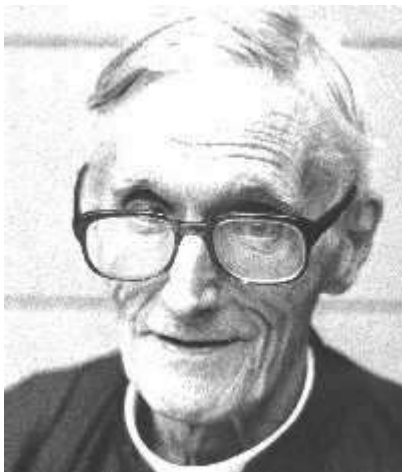
### Father Laurence Kelly 1968 – 1969

The growth of the parish has been such that Ampleforth allocated an assistant priest to the Parish. This happy situation lasted until Father Forbes dies. Father Kelly was with us from 1968-1969.

### Father George Forbes 1969 – 1971

Father Forbes came to assist his younger brother from 1969 to 1971. He came with a string of qualifications and decorations.

When he died on 4th July 1991 he merited obituaries in the National Press. The emphasis was on his being a soldier and a priest. He was a Catholic Chaplain to the 1st Guards Brigade during the Italian campaign of 1944-45. To us he was Father George, who was never happier than when he was walking across the playground with small boys and girls vying to hold hands with him.



### Father Leonard Jackson 1971 – 1976

Father Thomas Clayton Leonard Jackson was born and baptised in Our Lady and All Saints Parish, Parbold. He was Assistant Priest to the Parish at the time of his death on 23 February 1999.

Educated at Ampleforth, he joined the monastery there in 1937. During his early monastic career he had to serve in the RAMC as part of the pre War call-up before being released. He was ordained Priest in 1945 and spent the next fifteen years teaching Geography at Ampleforth College, being Chaplain to the Domestic Staff and running the College Kinema.

In 1960 he was sent to the Ampleforth foundation at St Louis Missouri USA where he became Deputy Headmaster.

He returned to England in 1971 to become Assistant Priest at Our Lady and Saint Gerard's Lostock Hall. He soon became a friend to everyone. Father Jackson's forte was electronics



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and this endeared him to many young people with whom he did a tremendous amount of work in the parish.

In 1976 he was appointed Parish Priest of Saint Mary's Bamber Bridge. In 1986 he retired to become Assistant Priest at Saint Austin's' Grassendale Liverpool. In 1993 he came to Our Lady and All Saints Parbold as Assistant – complete with his Cigarettes, Model Railway and Cups of Tea.

Father Leonard took ill in Parbold Village on the morning of 23 February 1999 and died in Hospital at Southport that evening.

## **Father Boniface Hunt 1976 - 1981**

Father Boniface arrived early in the New Year of 1977. In the same year his nephew James Hunt won the World Motor Racing Championship.

Father's mode of transport however was a bicycle. He had a rare gift of, in a very short sermon, making a most telling point.

He suffered from a Heart condition for many years and died on April 17th 1984 aged 60 years.

## **Father Justin Caldwell 1981 – 1983**

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## **Father Francis Vidal 1991 – 1992**

Father Patrick Francis Vidal was born in London in 1919. Educated at Ampleforth he entered the monastery there in 1937. Whilst a Monk studying at Oxford University he played for the University XV for two seasons. Returning to the Abbey he was ordained Priest in 1947.

Two years later he went to the Ampleforth Parish of Workington as assistant Priest to begin fifty years' service on the Ampleforth Parishes. From Workington he went to Saint Benedict's Warrington, nine years later to Saint Mary's Harrington before being moved to Saint Mary's Bamber Bridge.

