

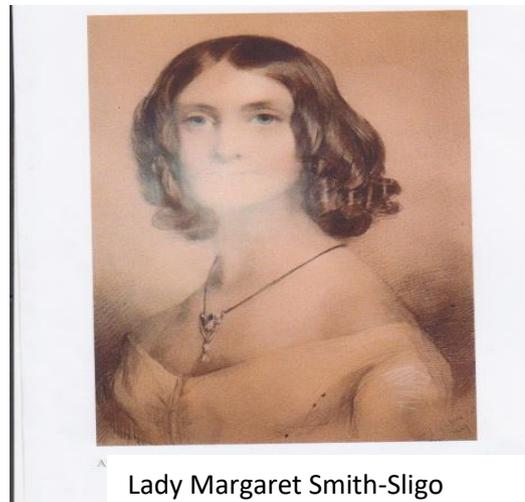
THE HISTORY OF HOLY NAME

(Abridged from "A History of Holy Name Parish, Oakley" by John Nolan)

The history of Holy Name is inextricably linked to the Smith-Sligo family. This cross marks the family burial plot and is still there today.



Holy Name's journey really started in 1858 when Lady Margaret Harris (nee Sligo) – wife of Archibald Vincent Smith of Inzievar House, Oakley, wrote three urgent letters to Bishop Gillis in Edinburgh. She offered to fund a chapel in Oakley if he would allow the Rev. William Smith (her husband's brother) to be her chaplain at Inzievar.



Lady Margaret Smith-Sligo

As a direct result of Lady Harris' letters, William Smith began his ministry in Oakley. Oakley's first baptism was registered by Fr. Smith on 3rd July 1859 – Rose Gray.

1859 also saw the opening of a school called Forth Academy – this building is currently Oakley Centre on the A907. The school was paid for by the Smith-Sligo family. The family was an ardently Catholic landowning and industrialist one which had financial interests in coal and owned the local ironworks. As a place of learning for all Oakley children during the week, the school became a place of Catholic worship

on Sundays. Indeed it remained so until 1904 when a new wooden chapel was built on the site of what would become a Carmelite Convent.



Rev. William Smith

Fr. Smith served as Oakley's priest until 1878 in a village which faced serious deprivation when the ironworks failed. Fr. Smith moved to Edinburgh as Vicar General and became Scotland's second post-Reformation Archbishop in the restored hierarchy in 1885.

1878-1929

He was succeeded by Fr. Francis Lynch. A native of Ireland he served in Oakley from 1878 to 1886 before returning to his native land.

The period 1886-1907 was a difficult one for Oakley's parishioners. The village was served by priests from Dunfermline. At about the same time that the Smith-Sligo family built Forth Academy in Oakley, Archibald Vincent Smith-Sligo purchased suitable land in Dunfermline for the building of a chapel, presbytery and school. He also paid the rent of a temporary school in the meantime in addition to the salaries of teachers both in Dunfermline and Forth Academy. The present St. Margaret's Church Dunfermline is built on this gifted land.

By the time that Oakley regained its own priest in 1907 many changes had taken place for Oakley's Catholics.



Archibold Dominic Smith-Sligo, son of benefactor Archibold Vincent, offered in 1896 the substantial house of Fernwoodlea within his Inzievar estate as the site for the first Carmel foundation in Scotland since the Reformation. The Fernwoodlea property was adapted with the addition of a newly built chapel which would serve as the public oratory for the village. (Forth Academy had, of course, served as both school and place of worship for Oakley's Catholics from 1859 – see above).

Within a few years, however, it became clear that Fernwoodlea, despite its size and grandeur, was far from ideal. Its location, deep in the woods of Inzievar Estate, was too remote for both the nuns and parishioners. The nuns left for more suitable accommodation in Edinburgh in 1902 and the decision was made to provide a wooden church. This was built behind Shrub Cottage (originally accommodation for the Smith-Sligo family tutor).

As far as can be determined, the opening of the wooden church in 1904 (also paid for by the Smith-Sligo family) saw the first mention of Oakley parish as Holy Name Parish.

In 1907 Oakley regained its own priest. When Fr. Francis O'Brien became Holy Name parish priest in 1907 he had an almost new church and within two years an adjoining Carmelite Convent. Fr. O'Brien served until 1912. Three priests followed him in quick succession. Fr. Thomas Ferrigan served in Oakley from 1912-14. Fr. Henry Woods was already sixty-one when he took over in Oakley from 1914-1919. Fr. Alfred Smith-Steinmetz, a native of Oakley and member of the Smith-Sligo family, served in Oakley from 1919-29.

1929-1953

Fr. Smith-Steinmetz was succeeded by a Glaswegian, Andrew MacIntyre, who was a keen ornithologist. He died in Oakley in 1937. Forth Academy had always been a school for all Oakley's children and it was in 1934 that John Nolan (father to the author of the history) was appointed headteacher. He stayed for thirty years and worked successfully to integrate community, school and church.

He was joined in 1937 by Fr. James Collins who unfortunately did not stay long in Oakley as he departed for the Missions. Fr. Francis McFarlane worked in Oakley from 1938-1941.

The dark days of 1941 saw the arrival of Fr. Peter Smith who served Holy Name throughout the war. He introduced the Young Christian Workers' Association movement to the parish.

Oakley's population grew quickly in the late thirties and continued to do so in the immediate post-war years due to the expansion of coal mining in West Fife. There was pressure both on the original Forth Academy of 1859 and also on the wooden 1904 church. Its capacity was increased in 1947 from 120 to 170 which seemed to bear out the prediction of the 1905 Catholic Directory that it would serve "*until the further development of trades in the district*".

1946 saw the arrival in Oakley of Fr. John Fusco who stayed until 1953. Responding to demographic needs he pressed for a separate Catholic school and a larger, "*more permanent edifice of stone*": a new church.

1953-1958: A New Holy Name Church

Fr. Fusco's successor - Fr. John William McNay - was a small man with a big heart. His ministry in Oakley would last for thirty three years. Indeed, even as a retired priest he remained, until his death in 2001, in the village he loved and which loved him.

The Ministry of Works allocated the starting date for the building of the new church. It was to be 1st January 1955.

Archbishop Gray laid the Foundation Stone on the Feast of Christ the King in 1956. This stone at the south side of the sanctuary reminds all who even today read its inscription that the Smith-Sligo family had made this new church possible:

"gratias quam maximas praeclarae Smith-Sligo genti habemus et agimus"

(we express our deepest gratitude to the distinguished Smith-Sligo family)

The architectural notes from the firm Reginald Fairlie & Partners tell us what they were trying to achieve:

"It was felt that the style had to be essentially Scottish in character. Hence the lavish use of the crow-stepped gable, the typically Scottish bell tower in the centre of the front gable. The exterior walls will be pure white harling with stone facings and mouldings. It is interesting to note that the stone used is the first to be quarried from the recently re-opened Cullaloe quarry, which is situated within a few miles of the site. The slates will be also Scotch (sic),

black from Ballachulish. The framework is of steel. The interior is designed very simply and the chief motif used is that of the Roman arch. Particular emphasis is laid on the design of the Sanctuary to conform as far as possible with the post-war tendency to return to the rules of Liturgy and Rubrics”.

“In Scottish tradition, a small family side-chapel is provided with direct vision of the Sanctuary and a choir tribunal is provided over the main Entrance at the rear of the nave.”

Between the laying of the Foundation Stone in 1956 and its opening two years later many tradesmen were employed to build the new church. On 15th May 1957 the ground on which the new church was being built, together with Shrub Cottage, the (now dilapidated) Convent and the wooden church of 1904 were transferred to the Church by the Smith-Sligo family Company. It was, and is, very rare for a parish to be debt-free from the outset.

Despite the unquestionable generosity of the Smith-Sligo family, Oakley’s own parishioners were keen to feel it was their church too. The following were donated to the new church by parishioners: the Sanctuary lamp: the Mass cards: the cruets and hand bells: the monstrance: the tabernacle: six large candlesticks which overlooked the altar: the lectern.



Most noteworthy among these gifts is the Sanctuary lamp – a Davey Miners’ Safety Lamp. At this time many of Oakley’s Catholics worked in the local coalmines in Comrie, Blairhall and Valleyfield. It was entirely apt that the Sanctuary lamp represented a synthesis of spiritual and physical salvation.

The family side-chapel mentioned in the Architectural Notes (see above) was for the exclusive use of the Smith-Sligo family. The two windows in the side-chapel make this quite explicit. They show the coats of arms and mottoes of both the Smith-Sligo and Fletcher families who had, through marriage, come together. Their respective mottoes, *Sliego veritas* and *recta pete*, which are inscribed in the glass, share a central Christian message: seek after truth and things which are right.

Perhaps the most famous features in the new church are its stained glass windows and Stations of the Cross – both made by Gabriel Loire (see separate section to read more....).

A leading figure from Scotland's own artistic community added further beauty to the exterior of the church.



Hew Lorimer (1907-1993) created a simple but evocative stone sculpture of the Child Jesus, which can be seen above the side entrance to the church.

In November 1958 the Church of the Holy Name was, with great ceremony, opened by Archbishop Gray in the presence of Fr. McNay, other local priests, dignitaries and, most importantly, hundreds of Oakley parishioners. The church was opened and consecrated on the same day. That was most unusual in Scotland but was possible because the church had no debt (see above). There are many photographs and artefacts from that day in the church museum – see separate section to read more....

The Vatican Council 1962-65 and Holy Name Parish

The Second Vatican Council was a radical review of the very essence of the mission and role of the church in a fast-changing world. As in many other churches a practical consequence of this Council was the decision to place altar and priest nearer or within the congregation. The priest would no longer have his back to the people.

In Holy Name the stone altar with the inscription: "*Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus*" was brought forward to the middle of the sanctuary where it is today.

In the spirit of modernisation there were the beginnings of democratisation in the administration of parish affairs. Around 1962 Holy Name Parish formed its first Parish Council with Headteacher John Nolan as its chairman.

After the opening of the new church in 1958, the 1904 wooden church was renovated by parishioners to form a church hall. It was the location of all kinds of parish events as well as serving as the local Cub/Scout hall. Nothing of it remains today.

A beautiful carved wooden door was removed from the old church and Convent and installed in the new church. Even today, whenever the priest moves from Sacristy to Sanctuary he passes, in the shape of the door, from old to new church.

Fr. McNay retired in 1986 and was followed by Fr. Edward Gallagher who served Holy Name for three years before moving to St. Margaret's in Edinburgh.

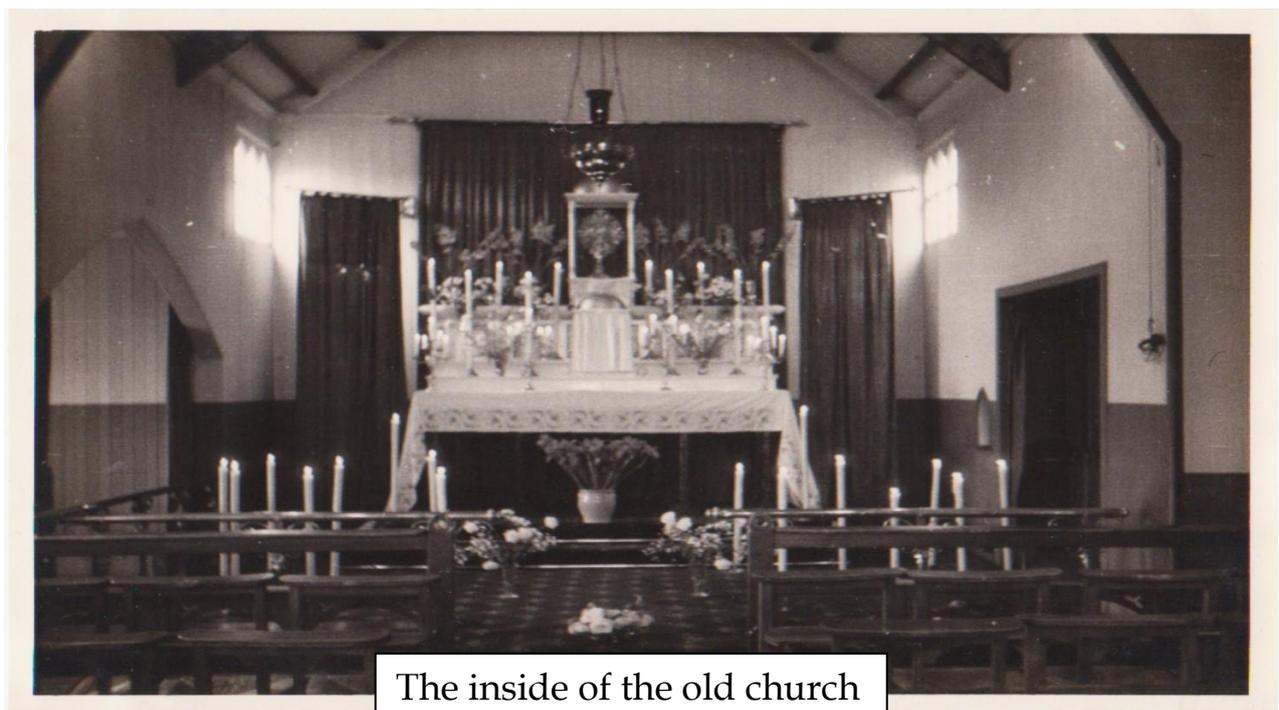
In 1989 Fr. Michael Carey was appointed to Holy Name and he served almost twenty years, retiring in 2007. Holy Name was served from St. Margaret's Dunfermline until Fr. Alex Davie was appointed in November 2012. His appointment was very much welcomed as the parish had to cope without a regular priest for a couple of years.

After Fr. Alex left in 2018 Holy Name was formally amalgamated with St. Margaret's in Dunfermline - we are now two churches but the one parish of St. Margaret's. The parish priest at the time of writing is Fr. Chris Heenan.

Acknowledgements

Much of the information in this history is gleaned from John Nolan's "*A History of Holy Name Parish, Oakley*". If you wish more detailed information and, in particular, Holy Name Parish's links with the local Catholic school, it is all in that book along with many personal recollections. There are, at time of writing, some copies of it available from the church.

Below are some photographs taken from a presentation made by a parishioner from Holy Name - Tom Canning.





Holy Name Gala from the early 1950's



The late Fr. McNay showing the boys how to kick a ball in the grounds of the old convent.