

# **The Parish of St Margaret Mary**

**1933 to 1998**

(Including the Diamond Jubilee of St Margaret Mary's School)

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## **1 Foreword to the Second Edition**

We were very pleased to be able to help the Parish celebrate 65 years by producing a revised edition of this potted history. Both of us class ourselves as products of the Parish and have benefitted from before primary school and onwards with the help of the Parish Priests, Assistant Priests and Teachers who continually gave their help and support during the years. As well as re-editing the first edition, a lot of new research has been incorporated, uncovering many interesting new snippets of information which we try to share.

Many thanks must go on our behalf to those who have given their time and assistance in compiling this history, a full list can be found in the acknowledgements at the back of this brochure.

Paul Lovell and Stephen Wright  
October 1998

## **Foreword to the First Edition**

As we celebrate the Golden Jubilee of our Parish it seems right and fitting that we recall the past. This booklet is an effort to do so. The bones of a brief history need clothing. The following account is an attempt to do so by gleaning from many memories, stories, photographs, press references and individual accounts. In fifty years the Parish has had only four Parish Priests and what has been achieved is, for the most part, the work of Canon Begley, to whose faith, foresight, courage and drive the Parish is indebted. To the parishioners who have born the "heat of the day" we are also indebted - a big "thank you", for your many unremembered sacrifices. May the future be marked with the same spirit of commitment and perseverance.

A word of thanks to all, both Catholic and non-Catholic, who have helped to produce this booklet to mark the occasion.

Yours sincerely,  
Michael Gill, P.P. (1983)

## 2 St. Margaret Mary Alacoque

St. Margaret Mary is the name of our Parish and indeed a good place to start on the Parish history. The canonisation of Margaret Mary Alacoque in 1920 must have decided the name of the future Parish in South Carlisle, but who was Margaret Mary?

Margaret Mary was born on 22nd July 1647, in a farmhouse at L'Hautecour, Charolais, in the province of Burgundy, France -the fifth child of the family Alacoque. The Valley in which L'Hautecour is situated, is surrounded by rugged mountains bearing huge forests of pines and ancient oaks, spotted with golden gorse and pink and white heather. It is the ideal setting for nurturing a contemplative spirit.

Margaret Mary's father died when she was eight years old. The family was reduced to penury, her mother being unable to collect the bad debts owing to her late husband. The farm was taken over by relatives who subjected the saint and her mother to relentless persecution.

Every night, Margaret would retire to her tiny room and spend most of the night in prayer and meditation. Our Lord would show himself, as he appeared after the scourging - very distressed. On one occasion he directed her to enter the Visitation Convent at Sainte Marie. She entered the convent on the 20th of June 1671. The convent is still there today, and pilgrims attend the twice-yearly solemn procession.

She donned the black habit on 25th of August. She was full of ardour and eagerness in her love for the Sacred Heart, in as much as her superior, becoming anxious about her behaviour, ordered her to sweep the cloisters instead of morning meditation. She was now entering into the ecstasies and revelations for which her whole life had been prepared. Christ had told her he wanted her as a willing victim:

"Behold the wound in my side wherein thou art to make thy actual abode, now and forever."

She wrote:

"I cannot live without suffering in silence, without consolation."

She was professed in November 1672. The first of the four great visions in which Christ revealed His Sacred Heart took place on the Feast of St. John in 1673. She was to be the means of the spreading of the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

On the second vision she saw the Heart of Christ on a throne of flame and fire, shedding on every side brilliant rays of light- a picture which He wished exposed to touch the hearts of men. Wherever it was displayed it would bring down many blessings.

The third vision occurred on the first Friday of an unspecified month. For love of His Sacred Heart, He commanded her to receive Communion on the first Friday of every month.

The fourth and greatest vision took place during the octave of Corpus Christi in 1676. Before the Blessed Sacrament Exposed, she heard-Behold the Heart which has so loved men, that it has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself to prove its love to them." He asked that the Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi

should be set apart as a special Feast to honour His Heart, by receiving communion on that day and making reparation as a solemn act.

"I promise that my Heart shall open to shower its Divine Love upon those who do this."

In July 1690, Margaret Mary knew the end was near, she became ill on 8th October. At seven o'clock in the evening of 17th October she said, "There is nothing left for me to do in this world but to enter into the Sacred Heart." Before the entire assembled community, in the arms of two of the novices, she whispered "Jesus." She expired at eight o'clock. She was 43 years old

On the Feast of the Ascension in 1920, Pope Benedict XV proclaimed her a Saint. Her Feast day is 17th October.

"Under the Shadow of Him whom I had desired do I sit, and his fruit is sweet to my mouth."

### **3 The History of St Margaret Mary's Parish - 1933 to 1998**

- **In the Beginning**

In 1929 the Church of Our Lady and St Joseph was the chief Catholic Community in the Carlisle area. The Parish it served was vast covering the city and its eastern hinterland as far as Alston in the Pennine region and Serbergham at the foot of the Lake District. It was a largely rural parish, with most of the congregation living in Carlisle itself and attending the main place of worship then, the building on Warwick Road, built in 1893 and the old St Bedes Church in Caldewgate. But early in that decade, the city of Carlisle had begun to expand rapidly. The City Corporation bought large areas of land, and a programme of house building began which saw the city double in size in just 20 years.

It was clear the ministers of the main Catholic Church that new places of worship would be needed to serve the Catholic community in the new suburbs, and this would mean forming new parishes that would cover these new communities. The Parish Priest at the time was Father Knuckey and it was he who was responsible for this process. One of the fastest growing parts of the city was the southern suburb of Currock and Upperby. It was felt that a Catholic Church here was a priority in order to save Catholics the journey over to Warwick Road, the nearest centre for Mass. It would also reduce the burden on the Parish of Our Lady and St Joseph, enabling it to concentrate its resources more fully on a smaller area.

The formation of a new Parish took place and included the villages of High Hesket, Ivegill and Sebergham, and of course the southern area of Carlisle between the River Caldew and the main Carlisle to Lancaster Railway, all formally in within the boundaries of Our Lady and St Joseph.

So it was that the Parish of St Margaret Mary was born. Now came the task of providing a place of worship where the Parish could meet. Father Knuckey sought a plot of land where a church could be built as well as providing enough space in the future for a school. He was able to purchase a site on Blackwell Road, not far from the church of St. Herbert with St Stephen that was built shortly afterwards. It would take some time before the premises would be ready for the Parish to use and so the search began for premises that the Parish could use for Mass in the meantime.

The search for a place of worship led to an arrangement for the use of a room on the first floor of the Currock Hotel in which the Parishioners could gather. Mrs Dean, the Landlady, had agreed to Father Knuckey's request to use the room in the building at certain times during the week for services, which she prepared beforehand for the purpose. St Margaret Mary's Parish was served from the Warwick Road church by Father Gracey, Father Keily and Father Hannigan.

Later in that year Father Knuckey was appointed Vicar General of the Lancaster Diocese, which meant him moving away from Our Lady's Parish. Monsignor R L. Smith took on his role. The priority now became the appointment of a Parish Priest and to begin the process of establishing a school. In January 1930, the Parish Council of Our Lady and St Joseph met and discussed the need for a new Catholic School which would serve the needs of the new Parish of St Margaret Mary's. However

because it was to be run according Catholic Tradition, no support would be forthcoming from the public Education Authority. At that time the setting up of a purely Catholic school was not a priority for the Education Authority. This meant that the church would have to cover all the costs itself. For the Parish this meant a campaign to raise as much of the money as possible and a series of fund-raising initiatives including a sale of work. All of these over the following years succeeded in meeting a large proportion of the estimated ten thousand pounds it would cost. While this was going on, the Parish received word that it would have a Priest of its own. The Bishop of Lancaster appointed Father James Parkinson as the first Parish Priest of St Margaret Mary's. He joined the Warwick Road Rectory from his former Parish in Wigan but was able to move out in 1932 to his own residence on Blackwell Road, next to where the church and the school were to be built.

In the same year Father Harker, the Curate of Our Lady and St Joseph made the next step towards provision of a school when he applied to the Education Authority for permission to go ahead with a building for the teaching of Catholic children in the tradition of the church. Permission was refused for a second time prompting the decision to concentrate all efforts towards a Parish Hall that could be used both as a church and a social centre in order to provide the Catholic community of St Margaret Mary's with a focal point. It was also envisaged that once the church was built the Hall would revert to a use as the new School Hall, although events later changed this. Work began on the building of the Parish Hall/Church in the spring of 1933 under the direction of the Architect Mr F.A. Coyle of Newcastle at a cost of seventeen hundred pounds with the foundation stone being placed in the nearly finished building that autumn. The first Bishop of Lancaster, Thomas Wulstan Pearson OSB, DD, carried out the blessing in this, the Parish's first building on the Blackwell Road site. Also it was attended by a great many laity and ministers from local Parishes and was reported in the local press. The building officially opened in 1933 with Masses being held daily and with Sunday services at 8:30 and 10:30 am, the seating was for 130.

The Campaign for a school and purpose built church continued, supported considerably by the proceeds of concerts and other events that were held in the newly opened hall. Always at the centre of these efforts was Father Parkinson, who in spite of failing health suffered greatly to deal with the needs of his Parish. This prompted the Bishop to send a new figure to take on the increasing demands of the Parish and in 1935 Father Patrick Begley was appointed as the new Parish Priest with Father Parkinson moving to Carnforth, marking the beginning of the most memorable and eventful era in this history.

- **Onwards and Upwards**

Soon after his arrival, a Parish council was formed to plan and discuss Parish matters. Foremost on the list was the provision of a school. Despite the previous two unsuccessful attempts it was decided to apply again, this time using a new site offering much more space on the Kirklands Road. Father Begley believed that this three and a half-acre site would be the best place for the school and thus purchased it. Despite not having permission to open the school, Father Begley, himself very confident, went ahead with the construction of the school and in the following year, despite a large sum still needing to be raised, work began in earnest by the builders, J and R Bell, and the Architect, Mr Badger from Liverpool. The foundation stone was

laid in a ceremony held on the 12th December 1937 with Bishop Pearson in attendance to bless the building.

St Margaret Mary's School was finished eight months later at a cost of ten thousand pounds. However the anti Catholic Local Education Authority refused to give permission for the school to open and so on the 31<sup>st</sup> July Father Begley travelled to London to see the National Education Board to ask for their consent. He managed to sway the board into giving approval and he returned to Carlisle the same day with the signed document allowing the school to open. It opened three days later on the 3rd August 1938. The school had space for 200 pupils in four teaching classrooms with a spacious hall including a stage for school productions, and a nursery block for pre-school children. The staff appointed in the new school included Sister Cuthbert as Headteacher and Sister Basil as assistant teacher. The Sisters of the Sacred Heart were appointed to look after the nursery.

The official opening took place 10 days later with the first hymn being sung (Faith of our Fathers) Father Begley performed the blessing of the school. Amongst those present were many parishioners, Priests from the Parishes of St Margaret Mary, St Bede's and Our Lady and St Joseph, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart and the local press to look around the building. At an address in the School Hall he thanked everyone who had been involved in the realisation of the school, which despite the best efforts of the Parish was still a long way from being paid for. With the opening of the school, most of the activities previously held in the Parish Hall were transferred to the School Hall leaving the former just as a Church.

As the school got underway, many other aspects of Parish life were being established. A division of the Scouts was organised, and soon after came the Cubs, Brownies, Guides organised by Mrs Brunskil, whose presence was firmly established in the Parish. A Men's Sodality was set up, followed soon after by a Women's Sodality and groups of the Children of Mary and Legion of Mary. Much of this was only possible through the presence in the Parish of Assistant Priests or Curates, who had time to organise and even lead these activities. The first Curate of St Margaret Mary's was Father Taylor, and he as well as his successors, of whom there were sometimes more than one in the Parish at any one time, contributed in many ways to the life and work achieved in the Parish.

One of the major fundraising ideas by Father Begley was the Finnegans ball. This took place over two nights in the School Hall. It was an overwhelming success and still remembered fondly by all who went to it. Photos and memories of this are featured later.

- **The War Years**

The Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, announced that Britain was once again involved in war in Europe in September 1939. The events in Europe during the summer had seen preparations in the event of this being made in the Parish. The school had been provided with four air raid shelters and the area's air raid siren was mounted on the school roof. By October pupils evacuated from the Felling and Pelaw schools on Tyneside in the northeast were attending the school in a double shift arrangement. This did not last for long as the evacuees were returned home after the threatened air raids failed to materialise in the expected quantities. Normal school hours were returned to in the January of 1940. The army itself was also present in the Parish, having a base on the nearby Carlisle racecourse, and could be seen moving about the streets in their Bren Carriers. The schoolyard was chosen as a training area for the local Home Guard, practising training exercises against the regular army.

With the major entertainment venues taken over for the billeting of troops, smaller venues became the centres of entertainment during this time. St Margaret Mary's was no exception and became one of the most popular in the city hosting a variety of activities, most notably the dancing evenings held as much as four times a week. The school hall served a similar purpose, the main attraction here being the film shows held on Sunday evenings. In 1942 the military Border Regiment Band, whom Father Begley recruited for the occasion, attended the annual Corpus Christi celebrations leading the procession on its route between the church and the school. Their presence made the event a much more heartening and morale boosting occasion.

In 1944 came the news that Father Peter Firth, a former curate in the Parish, had been killed in the course of his role as a medic, attending to soldiers wounded in action during the landings on Sword Beach on D-Day.

Victory in Europe or V.E. Day was celebrated in May the following year and whilst the parish itself did not sustain any physical damage throughout the war, the loss of several members who were present in the midst of conflict was felt deeply within the community.

### • **Post War Challenges**

During the War years the number of children attending the school had steadily increased so that by 1945 there were almost 200 pupils on roll, the maximum the school had been designed to accommodate. In the same year Sister Basil succeeded Sister Cuthbert as Headteacher. It was at this time that Father Begley began working towards another ambition that he believed would bring many benefits to the Parish. The many activities, which now were taking place in the Parish, had to be staged in either the Parish Hall or the School Hall, both of which were limited in the facilities, they offered. To overcome this, the Parish Council looked into the provision of a separate building where social functions held in the Church Hall could take place. Construction of such a building so soon after the war could not be achieved, and the way in which the Parish Hall of St Margaret Mary's was achieved was down to the efforts and mental agility of Father Begley. After the war, countless temporary buildings were vacated from their use by the army as barracks, canteens and medical centres. The presence of so many empty but recently built structures presented the idea of obtaining one of the better structures, dismantling it and taking the

components to an appropriate site and reconstructing it. This was how Father Begley managed to achieve his aim. The Parish Hall was taken from its original site at Haweswater Reservoir where it was believed to have been part of the site hut associated with its construction, and latterly as a workers shelter or possibly a storeroom. However it became unused and was and acquired by Father Begley and was taken to its new home on the Scalegate Road during the early 1940's to be reconstructed between 1942 and 1945. The structure itself was made up of solid cast iron panels fitted together inside a timber frame supporting the roof. The outside was rendered to make it weatherproof and the first of many additions, the boiler house was added. From these humble origins the building was to become an established and invaluable part in the recreation and social life of the Parish.

With the number of pupils on roll in the school increasing to 262 in 1952 and 290 the following year, new teaching facilities were urgently required. This was finally met with the construction of two new classrooms in between the existing blocks. The new accommodation came as a relief to both staff and pupils alike as well as a further reward for all the continuing work put into raising Parish funds. However although this relieved the shortage of space at St Margaret Mary's for a time, rapidly increasing numbers meant that in 1957 39 pupils had to be taught at Inglewood School for a term.

1956 was a special era for the Parish, as it was in that year that an important addition to Parish life was established. The idea of creating a social club had been put forward, using the premises of the Parish hall, to which support of the membership would fund the provided amenities of a bar, games facilities and entertainment. The club was awarded its licence on 3rd December of 1956, with a Committee being elected at the first general meeting held in February the following year.

Again in 1956 the Parish of Christ the King got its new church with the Parish Priest being Father Keily. The Priest's of St Margaret Mary's had said, prior to this, Mass in the canteen of Cavaghan and Grey, famous for producing food for Marks and Spencer.

Further extensions to the school were made in 1958, when a much needed new classroom was added as well as the enlargement of the staff room and the building of an office for the Headteacher.

### • **Goals Achieved**

From the time of the creation of the Parish the main goal had been the founding of a church. Both ministers and laity had anticipated this but for mainly financial reasons St Margaret Mary's Parish did not have a building solely designed for Catholic worship and rites. The hall of 1933 had been a temporary solution to this but it was the aim of Father Begley to build a purpose built church to serve the Parish. The success of past fund-raising finally led to the decision towards the end of the 1950's to press ahead with the construction of a new church. Not everyone was to benefit initially from the construction because the Parish's local football league team was made homeless as their full sized pitch was taken over for part of the church building.

construction began on 1st of October 1960 by the builders, Miller and Sons, under the direction of the Architect, Mr James Brignell Dand. Father Begley had been on holiday in Italy at the time and the style of the church was very much influenced by what he saw. The building was designed in Lombardic Basilica style and constructed out of brick with a steel frame with three apses. Above the doorway was a gallery for the choir and to the rear a Presbytery. To the east a 75 feet high 23 metres, square tower built from brick housing the old church bell, which used to be suspended by two pieces of track from the Caledonian Railway in the old Hall on Blackwell Road. On the 14th of May 1961 the foundation stone was laid by the then 2<sup>nd</sup> Bishop of Lancaster, Thomas Flynn PhD MA in a ceremony inside the walls of the half-finished structure that was to become the new church of St Margaret Mary.

The opening Ceremony took place fifteen months later on the 15th August 1962 with the blessing being carried out by 3<sup>rd</sup> Bishop Brian Foley. Internally the building was able to accommodate a congregation of around 500 in wooden pews, some of which date from the old church on the Blackwell Road. Other furnishing's from the old church were in the Pulpit, but the font was conjured up by Father Begley from Our Lady and St Michael's in Workington. The Stained glass window on the west gable wall, depicted Our Lord showing his Sacred Heart to St Margaret Mary and was donated by Emily Burbridge, Sister Basil's Mother. The High Alter and side Altars were constructed from Lakeland slate. The Stations of the Cross were carved in the Austrian Tyrol. The total cost of the whole project was approximately forty thousand pounds. Some of the debt was repaid with the sale of the old site on Blackwell Road as well as other schemes of Fr. Begley's. A Concert Room was added to the Club with a ten thousand-pound loan charmed interest free from Hammonds brewery by Father Begley in 1963. The roof trusses for the Concert Room were purchased from Dalton's Yard in Carlisle in 1962 and can be seen at the rear of the Club in the picture on an earlier page.

It was during this time that changes took place, which would affect considerably the lives of Catholic. Pope John XXIII announced that a council was to be held to review the traditions of the Catholic Church in response to the to the many changes that were taking place in society. Vatican II began in 1962 and introduced a number of changes which altered the way church services would be led. Firstly Mass would no longer be said in Latin but in the language of the country in which the service was to be carried out. The Priest would now face the congregation throughout a structurally different Mass, including the introduction of English versions of Hymns. It also changed the period of fasting before Communion from one day to just one hour and allowed Mass to be said on a Saturday. The Benediction, formerly a regular part of the service also ceased to be said with such frequency. All this was in place by the 1970's and formed a significant transition in the life of the Parish.

1962 saw the end of the traditional Corpus Christi procession route because with the completion of the church, the old hall on the Blackwell road was vacated. Instead a much smaller procession took place, following a route from the church to the school via Sclegate, Embelton and Upperby Roads. Within the confines of the church there were changes to the Sanctuary to create space behind the Altar by sealing up the door to the Sacristy as well as the moving of the Tabernacle to the wall.

The opening years of the 1970's was to see a number of changes within the Parish. A new lounge was opened and alterations were made to the Club, and in 1972 Sister Basil retired as Headteacher of St Margaret Mary's School and Mr Kevin Phillips was appointed to succeed her. This was followed by the news that in May 1974 Father Begley had decided to stand down from his duties as Parish Priest after 39 years in that role. His outstanding contribution to the Parish is unlikely to ever be forgotten in firmly establishing the Parish within the City and the Diocese. This impact on the city made him a well-known figure, still remembered fondly by many in Carlisle.

- **New Faces, New Challenges**

Father Gerry Dakin succeeded Father Begley in the role of Parish Priest. He arrived from St Thomas Moore's Church in Lancaster and other roles as a Curate in Blackpool and Preston. Not long after his arrival the Parish was host to three other representatives of the Church who arrived to visit the school. As part of the tour of the Diocese to celebrate his Episcopal jubilee in 1974 the Auxiliary Bishop of Lancaster, Thomas Pearson visited the Parish accompanied by the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, the Reverend John Carmel Heenan and Reverend Heim, the Apostolic Delegate to Great Britain.

1975 saw the redecoration of the church and a new cross for the inside of the church above the High Altar. It was also the last year of the annual Corpus Christi procession. It was replaced by a new procession at Warwick Road for other Church's in the Deanary.

The following year the School Governors agreed to organise the first school trip abroad. This weeklong visit by children and staff, accompanied by several Parishioners included visiting Belgium, Germany, Holland and France, an experience enjoyed by all. On a trip to York Mass on St. Peter and Paul Feast day was said in an empty Parcel Carriage laid on for the purpose by British Rail. The service began after Appleby to avoid any Tunnels which might have taken light away from the occasion.

The Bishop visited the Parish again in 1978 to celebrate Father Dakin's Silver Jubilee as a Priest on the 30th May 1978. It was marked by a presentation in the school of a silver watch inscribed with the date and followed by a celebration Mass in the Church and a buffet in the Club. Father Dakin remained with the Parish until January 1982 where he was appointed Priest to a new Parish in Preston. His leaving ceremony in the school was marked by a presentation being made to him.

The new Parish Priest was Father Michael Gill. He was a Cistercian monk who was born in County Galway in Ireland. He joined the Diocese in 1969 from Nunraw Abbey of Sancta Maria in Scotland having been ordained a Priest in Ireland in 1945. He had latterly been Curate at St Edmunds in Carlisle where he was the Infirmary Chaplain. His arrival coincided with the Golden Jubilee of the Parish and during 1983, the anniversary year of the opening of the first church. A great deal of effort was put into this celebration including a concert by the school and the compilation of a record of photographs, records and anecdotes from the people who had been part of the Parish over it's fifty year history. This was subsequently compiled into the first edition of this history of the Parish. It was also during this time, on the 15th May 1983 that the consecration of the church took place.

January 1984 saw the start of a playgroup for pre-school age children. It was St Margaret Mary's that was the first school to have a purpose built nursery in Carlisle, in 1938. It was the idea of Father Gill who upon being approached by the women of the Parish who had no facilities for their pre-school children. It was also an ideal opportunity to increase the numbers in the school. At first the sessions were held in an upstairs room of the Presbytery, by Mrs Elisabeth Lovell and Mrs Tessa Patterson, until the Playgroup room was set up in the school's old medical room, under the instruction of Mr Kevin Phillips, the Headmaster. It proved very successful with numbers rapidly growing. Mr Phillips retired as the Headmaster of St Margaret Mary's School in August 1983 to be replaced by the current Headmaster, Mr Greg Smith who joined the staff from St Catherine's School in Penrith. Also during the 1980's the school was opened to non-Catholic pupils for the first time and a gradual shift in where pupils came from began to happen. Many more of the pupils came from the Currock and Upperby districts of Carlisle and less from the outlying areas such as Harraby. In between times Sister Nuala Mullins arrived to become Parish Sister, she had taught in the school many years before going abroad. Four years later the school celebrated its Golden Jubilee with a special production commemorating each decade that the school had been through. Canon John Britt, once curate of the Parish in its formative years visited the school and presented a cine-film taken of past school events.

Father Gill retired in 1992 and was presented with a farewell gift from the Parish. A formal send off was arranged on the 3rd July when a concelebrated Mass to a full house was then followed by a Meal in the School Hall. His ten years in the Parish had seen him work closely with the school as well as establish the Playgroup, attend to the spiritual life of the Parish and prepare the children for the sacrament of Confirmation in their final year. Other more mundane, but vital projects included the replacing of the windows and roof of the school and replacing the expensive electric underfloor heating with more cost efficient gas central heating for the church, now more than thirty years old. It was also in 1992 that Miss C.M. Hilton, who had taught in the school for fifteen years from 1946 to 1951 passed away. In her will, she left a most generous bequest to the Parish.

The Priest appointed to replace him was Father Tony Ashcroft. He stayed in the Parish for only a year before being made Chaplain of the Little Sister of the Poor in Preston. His Silver Jubilee was celebrated while he was in the Parish with a concelebrated Mass and Buffet in the Club afterwards. Father Ashcroft's name was very well known due to being the author of a number of books on Catholicism.

His replacement was Father Tom Quirke, who arrived at St Margaret Mary's in February of 1993. In July of 1994 Sister Nuala left to go back to Ireland her home country. While in the Parish she had been a active Parishioner as well as taking Communion to the Sick and House bound. Father Quirke undertook a number of tasks. The first was the creation of a shrine in the disused baptistery. This was dedicated to the church's patron, Saint Margaret Mary. Bishop Brewer opened it in 1995, as a shrine and place of private prayer within the confines of the church. It also holds the Parish book of remembrance. A Golden Jubilee concelebrated Mass was held in May 1995 with Father Gill to celebrate his Fifty years in the Priesthood. A

buffet, presentation and speeches were then held in the Club afterwards, with many wet eyes amongst those present

During that summer work began on the upgrading of the school, now over fifty years old. The main focus was to provide a new facility to improve the Science and Technology aspect of the Curriculum with a new Technology block being added on to the library. Funds later paid for a new carpet in the church and an upgraded sound system

Father Quirke was keen to see more involvement of young people in the church, bringing a number of young Parishioners into roles as readers and Eucharistic servers. In the summer of 1995, the Parish came to know another Priest from a very different Parish to St Margaret Mary. Father Joakim Chisemphere who on leaving the Diocese became Priest at the Parish of Matero in Lusaka, Zambia and was in the United Kingdom studying for his doctorate in Pastoral Theology. He provided holiday cover for Father Quirke, who in handing him his keys quipped that "it was an opportunity to put into practice his pastoral theology!" His visits to the Parish were made memorable by the services he presented, giving a valuable insight into Catholicism in his part of the world. However it was in September of 1997 that the Parish learnt of his untimely death at the age of 38 in a road accident in Mozambique.

The summer of 1996 brought with it a visit from the Legion of Mary who came and stayed in the Parish for a week. They were stationed mainly in the Presbytery but a few stayed at Parishioners homes. The work they did included a visit to every house in the Parish distributing miraculous medals. This was part of the preparation for the Catholic Missionary Society who came the following year. In the August of 1997 Father Quirke arranged for two Members of the Parish to go to the 12th World Youth Day in Paris attended by the Pope. Father Quirke himself retired in September 1997, concelebrated Mass was held in the church followed by a buffet in the Club, where he was presented with a farewell gift from the Parish along with a surprise visit from Sister Nuala.

His replacement was Father Dan Darragon, appointed in September 1997 from the Parish of St. Joseph's in Seascale. During his first year as Priest a number of events took place in the Parish. The outcome of the pastoral review held in the Diocese was announced in August 1998 with the news that the Parish of Christ the King in the city would be served from St Margaret Mary's, with one Priest responsible for two churches. In the same month Father Kevan Dorgan came to the Parish as assistant to help Father Darragon in the extra work. To help both Parishes of Christ the King and St. Margaret Mary, two Nuns Sister Gerald and Sister Raymond along with a lay helper Mary Forster, to stay in Christ the King Presbytery. The Parish was in the middle of changes and among them came the news that the Holy Father John Paul II had awarded two outstanding and long serving members of the Parish with the Bene Merenti Medal, they were Benny Falloon and Kevin Phillips.

Shortly after, the results of the school inspection carried out earlier in the year were published and showed St Margaret Mary's to be a community which not only provided a successful learning environment, but also created an atmosphere reflecting its closeness to the Catholic Church. The Playgroup too has been complemented in

recent inspections. 1998 was also the year that the school celebrated its Diamond Jubilee.

A short history as this can only include the main events and occasions that have taken place in the Parish of St Margaret Mary's over the 65 years since its inception. Many other smaller but still important events have been left out, but not forgotten, and only a fraction of the people who have given their time and commitment to the Parish are recorded here. This history is a tribute to all their work and achievements both in the past and the future.

## **4 Canon Patrick Begley**

Bishop Glancey, at Oscott, near Birmingham ordained Fr. Begley a Priest on The 20th of December 1924. He was appointed immediately to St. Augustine's, Preston, where he did several years of service as a Curate before being sent to the Cathedral, Lancaster in 1931. The following year he returned to Preston spending three years at St. Gregory's.

In 1935 Fr. Begley was sent by Bishop Wulstan Pearson, OSB, DD to be Parish Priest at St. Margaret Mary's Carlisle. His instructions were to work towards the construction of a permanent church and school in the Parish. He achieved the latter part of his mission soon in 1938 when in spite of fierce opposition from several sources; the school of St. Margaret Mary was opened on August 3rd.

The building of a church to replace the old one on Blackwell road now became his burning ambition. Fr. Begley inaugurated various schemes to raise money for this project, perhaps the most successful being the Parish Football Pools, Bingo in the School Hall, Buy a Brick and the system later on of planned giving by Parishioners. He broke the monopoly of the State Management Scheme by obtaining a Liquor Licence for the Parish Hall in 1956. In his quest to do so he also stood as an Independent Councillor for Carlisle. The Parish hall is now St. Margaret Mary's Social Club, which contributes in many ways to the local Community.

Fr. Begley's ambition was realised when the present church was officially opened on the Feast of the Assumption, August 15th 1962. The whole complex of Church, Club and School now stands as a fitting testimonial to his business acumen. He was also active in other areas and in January 1968 Father Begley became the first Catholic Priest to preach in Carlisle Cathedral since the reformation in the 16th Century. In addition to his Parish work, Fr. Begley was instrumental in bringing the Nuns to St. Gabriel's and the Monks to Austin Friars School.

Following the retirement of Monsignor R.L. Smith of Our Lady and St. Joseph Parish, he was made Vicar Forane of St. Herbert's Deanery, a position he held until 1974 when he decided it was time to retire. He was made an honorary Canon by Bishop Foley at his Golden Jubilee, and celebrated his Diamond Jubilee in December 1984. Fr. Begley still lived close by to his favourite Church until he moved to St. Winifrid's, Blackpool in 1986.

On June 24th 1987 Fr. Begley died. He had helped to concelebrate in the Church that Easter with Fr. Gill. He was buried in Carlisle, a service held in a packed Church which included many children from the school he fought so hard for. Even 24 years after he was last Parish Priest, people still ask at the Presbytery for Father Pat, the second priest of St. Margaret Mary's.

## 5. Recollections

### **Kevin Phillips on his recollections of Parish life.**

In October 1935, at the tender age 11, I moved into Newlands Road in the Parish of St. Margaret Mary. The Parish had only been in existence for a short time but already we had our second Parish Priest Fr. Patrick Begley, Fr. Parkinson having moved to Our Lady of Lourdes, Carnforth.

Several of the houses in Newlands Road were empty but in Kirklands Road all the houses on the Northern side were occupied. On the other side behind the hawthorn hedge lay a field where cattle grazed peacefully on the luscious grass. This was a familiar scene in the fields were housing estates like Green Garth, Woodside, Brisco Road. Oaklands Drive and Cammock Drive are now built.

Little did I realise as I wondered along Kirklands Road, that in three years time a school would be built on this site, and that I would spend thirty three years of my working life in it. Furthermore, I had no idea that I would marry and my four children would be pupils of the school.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 1938, 47 children were admitted to the new Junior School, 25 children transferred from St. Cuthberts while the remainder came from Bishop Goodwin and Upperby Schools.

The school had four Classrooms, a Hall, Medical room and a Nursery, the first in Carlisle to have such facilities. Perhaps the elder members of the community will remember when the little green beds with red blankets were set out each afternoon, in the room, now used for a Reception Class.

The School Hall now became the centre of Parish activities. School plays and concerts especially at Christmas and Easter drew large audiences. The first unusual effort I was involved in was Finnegan's Ball, which was a great success. After almost sixty years I can't remember much about it but I do remember this ditty which was sung by the "Orchestra."

***Finnegan's Ball, what a night of jollity Finnegan's Ball dancing  
all around, we were strict tee total one and all till the corks came  
out at Finnegan's Ball.***

During the war years dances were held in the School Hall on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday evenings. These continued until the late 1940's. On Sunday evenings for the magnificent sum of 6d (22.5p) one could watch a film long before cinemas were allowed to open on the Sabbath. All these events generated finance to enable Fr. Begley to carry out his scheme of replacing the old church originally intended as a school hall to be replaced by a more palatial one.

Other moneymaking schemes such as the 'Handy Andy' and outdoor collection contributed. Perhaps the football pool another of Fr. Begley's ideas generated the most cash. At one stage as much as £70 per week was going into the church coffers.

This pool was soon copied by other parishes and even by Carlisle United Football Club.

I began teaching at St. Margaret Mary in 1950. The school had been in operation for 12 years and the number of pupils had increased considerably. Two buses were coming from Harraby bringing about one hundred children and most classes had more than forty pupils.

I often think how difficult it was for children to learn in those days because measurement, weight, capacity, etc were so complicated. Imagine a child of 11 having to know by heart such tables as these: -

16 ozs	1lb	12 ins	1 ft
14 lb	1 stone	3 ft	1 yd
2sts	1 quarter	22 yds	1 chain
28 lbs	1 quarter	10 chns	1 furlong
4 qrs.	1 hundredweight (cwt)	220 yds	1 furlong
8sts	1 cwt.	8 furs	1 mile
112 lb	1 cwt	1760 yds	1 mile
20 cwts	1 ton	5280 ft	1 mile
2240 lb	1 ton	63,360 ins	1 mile

Armed with tables such as this they were expected to answer such sums as: -

- Q How many packets of tea containing two ounces can be filled from a chest containing 1 st 12 lbs 14 ozs?
- Q How many pieces of ribbon 3 ins long can be cut from a roll measuring 15 yds 1 ft 9 ins?
- (To keep you in suspense, the answers are in the brochure – somewhere!)

In addition, there were such things as gills, pints quarts, pecks and bushels to consider as well as 12d in a shilling and 20 shillings in a pound, so arithmetic took up a large portion of the curriculum.

However, the children did learn in spite of all the difficulties. I suppose one must consider what a child of that era would make of TVs, word processors and even computers, all now being expertly handled by very young children.

Reading has always been taught extremely well. Phonics later combined with LOOK and SAY has persisted in spite of stupid suggestions from inspectors in the 70's. The Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a) was introduced, in theory this was wonderful for young children to learn to read quickly. If only when they finished school at 3.30p.m they would find comics, newspapers, books, road signs, adverts etc written in i.t.a, but of course they didn't. After I became Head in 1972 we decided to return to our normal methods.

Sport has always been encouraged. The Netball team frequently won honours in the league, cup and tournaments held at Inglewood School. Football however was never quite so successful.

The match I remember most took place on a neutral ground with a neutral referee. It was the semi final of the Knockout (K.O.) Cup. All the teams in the 'A' and 'B' Leagues took part and our opponents were Belah School, which had won the 'A' League without losing a match. Belah commenced like world leaders and at half time the score was 5-0 in their favour. Quite honestly the Lads played extremely well but luck was not with them. My pep talk was on the theme that if they continued to play well their luck would change and the game could still be ours. The second half was a different story and with a few minutes to go the score was five all. Then Arthur Turnbull, the only member of the team still living in the Parish hammered the ball home to win the game that had been played in the best sporting traditions of schoolboy football. We went on to defeat St. Cuthberts 3-2 in the final even though they were captained by Kevin Beattie who achieved fame playing for Ipswich and England.

Although no ex-pupil of St. Margaret Mary has played for England we have one Rory Delap now playing for Derby County in the Premier League who has played in the Irish under 21's team. Others like Gerald Fisher and David Carr have played in the lower leagues.

My final recollection is of an incident, which occurred shortly after I became Head. A child rushed into my office during the lunch break to inform me that Laura's arm was stuck in the railings. I dashed into the yard to find Laura with her arm firmly wedged in the railings in Kirklands Road, a sympathetic throng giving her all sorts of advice surrounded her. The Dinner Ladies arrived with soap and butter but their efforts were of no avail. As a last resort I decided to dial 999 for the Fire Brigade, and settled down to await their arrival. After a few minutes I was told that Laura had been released, so I cancelled the call. Unfortunately the fire engine was on its way and could not be contacted.

The children were ushered into school just as the engine arrived with siren sounding. I waited for the firemen with some trepidation expecting some choice language from their leader. Much to my delight I recognised him as an old friend. He was not in the least annoyed and suggested they should give a demonstration. The children were hurriedly brought from their classrooms and were soon witnessing a magnificent display with water being squirted according to them 'miles into the air.' I am glad to say that Laura suffered no serious injuries.

In these recollections I have deliberately refrained from mentioning by name any of the staff. What they have done in their varying capacities is well known by any parent whose children have attended. Their dedication cheerfulness and conscientious approach have helped to provide the school with a lovely atmosphere where work and play intermingle. The parents have always contributed to the work and their generous support of school events was always greatly appreciated. My I conclude by wishing Mr. Smith and his staff with every success in the future and congratulate them in their excellent OFSTED report.

## **Greg Smith with some Recollections of St. Margaret Mary School**

It was in 1971, as a newly qualified teacher, that I made my first tentative visit to St. Margaret Mary's. Little did I realise, as I made my way through the unfamiliar streets of Currock and Upperby, that this was to be the beginning of a long and happy association with this school.

In the absence of the legendary Sister Basil who at that time was the Headmistress, I was interviewed by a panel consisting of the Deputy Head, Miss. Shirley, the equally legendary Fr. Begley, and completing the team, his dog a black Labrador who's name escapes me. Obviously, the dog liked me, as I got the job.

I started in the September with Junior 3. This was the time when hair was long and skirts were short on several members of staff. I will spare their blushes by naming them but one is still on the staff and I married the other one. Kevin Phillips was assigned to look after me a job he continues to do so to this day.

In those early days, we had some memorable trips to both London and the Continent. This was in the days when travel was cheap. My first trip to London remains etched in my memory as the occasion when Sister led us at night on a sightseeing trip through the streets of Soho. I'm not sure if the children were wide eyed with sleep or something else but today they would refer to it as a broad and balanced education.

I remember many of the children from those early days, and indeed many of them now have their own children in school. There are sad memories too. I often think of young John Batemen, such a talented footballer, needlessly and senselessly killed in Crossmaglen.

In 1972, Sister Basil left and we sent her on her way to Cromer with a rising concert called "Grinding Halt" a musical about the railways. Mr. Phillips became Head and I was eventually to become deputy in 1977 when Maureen Shirley retired. Those years for me were very full and rewarding. I was a recently married man with a young growing family and working with some wonderful colleagues.

We were fortunate at that time to have a part time music teacher Mrs. Muriel Robinson. Some of the concerts she put on were memorable. She was a "character," but one who taught me so much about music that I am forever grateful to her.

I eventually left St. Margaret Mary's in 1980 and for four years was the Head of St. Catherine's School in Penrith. There was a vast difference between the schools both in size and in character and I was very happy in Penrith. Still, I had no hesitation in applying for and eventually being appointed as Head when Kevin retired in 1983.

The years since my appointment have seen changes that are more radical in Education than at any other time. With the advent of LMS (Local Management of Schools) we had really entered the age of acronyms. Looking back at it all I cannot believe some of the hoops we have jumped through! All the time, Technology was changing so fast that we could hardly keep pace. We have whizzed from Roneo stencils to laser

printers in the blink of an eye. Now even as I write this we are applying for funding to allow us to go online with the National Grid for access to the Internet and with it a wide array of technological capability.

I was very fortunate to have a strong and able Governing Body led by Peter Silvester as chair and supported by Frs. Michael Gill and Tim Sullivan. We owe Fr. Gill so much for his foresight to the securing the fabric of the building. I only wish his dream of having a nursery could be fulfilled.

Fr. Cotter (who along with Father Tim Sullivan were formerly Parish Priests of Christ the King) gave us so much with his interest in sport and his unflagging enthusiasm for anything to do with the children. One of my abiding memories will be of him rolling up his sleeves and helping the sole lady in Harry Ramsdens near Bradford serve nearly thirty hungry children.

Over the years, we have maintained happy and fruitful links with the Sisters of St Gabriel's Convent. Indeed, we have had several Nuns on the Staff all of whom will be remembered for their own unique contribution. Many things will stay in my mind. One is the time when Sister Brigid was locked out of the Convent after a night out with the staff. The other was the look on Kevin Phillip's face when Sister Basil had driven him down to Kewick through the snow to deliver a television, to a group of our children stranded at Castlerigg, the Diocesan Youth Center. Her driving was legendary, as was she.

Our days at St Gabriel's with the children have been special, as have our many wonderful visits to the Fellside Centre at Caldbeck as well as other visits to Skipton, Ilkey, Mardon Bridge School, Barcaple, and St Mary's Lighthouse. We have been blessed with many good friends over the years and at the moment I'm thinking of Brian Scroggie climbing trees and falling out of canoes. Frank Wright, Alf Bewley who with Kevin made me sleep under the sink while in Valkenburg and partook in noisy and very wet shaves as well as the great friends we will miss like Rena McMillan.

In 1998, a very rigorous OFSTED inspection praised us for the quality of teaching and learning in the school and also for our ethos as a caring and peaceful community. I was very proud

There are so many people I could name who have contributed so much over the years to this school and I hope none will be offended by any omission. Each and every one of them has played a part in making our school what it is.

St. Margaret Mary's has always been a special place to me, a place with an enduring tradition but never living in the past. We don't know what the future will bring but what is certain is that whoever is tasked with taking this community on into the next Millennium will be building on firm foundations.

## 6 List of Priests, Assistant Priests, School Staff and Parish Associates

### Parish Priests:

1933 – 1935	Father James Parkinson
1935 – 1974	Father (Later Canon) Patrick Begley
1974 – 1982	Father Gerard Dakin
1982 – 1992	Father Michael Gill
1992 – 1993	Father B. Anthony Ashcroft
1993 – 1997	Father Thomas Quirke
1997 -	Father Daniel Darragon

### Assistant Priests:

Father R. Taylor	Father (Later Canon) J. Britt	Father (Later Canon) F. Clegg
Father P. O’Dea	Father T. Gaffney	Father P. Firth
Father V. Cahalane	Father D. Gallagher	Father V. Fallona
Father M. Hogan	Father J. Kendall	Father B. Shuttleworth
Father V. Farrell	Father J. McAteer	Father J. Gibson
Father M. Heraghty	Father P. Draper	Father K. Dorgan

### School Staff:

#### Headteachers

1938 – 1945	Sister Cuthbert
1945 - 1972	Sister Basil
1972 – 1983	Mr K. Phillips
1983 -	Mr G. Smith

#### Deputies

1956 – 1977	Miss M.T. Shirley
1977 – 1980	Mr G. Smith
1980 - 1992	Mrs M. Davis
1992 -	Mrs E. Silvester

### Other Teaching Staff:

Sister Laurence	Mrs Costello	Miss Taylor	Miss McNamee
Mrs Palfery	Mrs Berry	Miss Bannon	Miss M. McDonald
Mrs Percy	Mrs Taylor	Mrs Gillen	Miss Gribbon
Sister Virgilius	Miss Fitzsimmons	Mrs Reid	Mrs Queen
Mrs Irvine	Miss Wilson	Miss Curran	Mrs Johnstone
Mr Rafferty	Mrs Rafferty	Miss O’Hara	Mrs P. Tyrell
Mrs Leyland	Mrs Tyson	Miss Gibson	Mrs Caven
Mrs Hayden	Sr. Presentation / Nuala	Mrs Loughran	Miss Snow
Mrs Lamb	Miss Jordan	Mrs Smith	Miss Woods
Miss Caird	Mrs Hutchinson	Mrs Newstead	Miss Quinn
Mr Young	Miss Caven	Mrs Potter	Mrs Occleston
Mr Wainwright	Miss Cullen	Mrs Khan	Mrs Hogg
Sister Teresina	Mrs Drobcyk	Mrs McNulty	Mrs Lusty
Miss Savage	Mrs Carr	Mrs Pooley	Mrs McDonald
Mrs Delap	Sister Moira	Sister Brigid	Mrs Johnstone
Mrs MacMurray	Sister Anne	Mrs Reardon	Mrs Rankin
Mrs Carr	Mrs Elton	Miss White	

### Non Teaching Staff:

Miss Nichols	Miss Little	Miss Davidson	Miss Gavicon
Miss Boyle	Miss Pieri	Miss Thorburn	Miss Armstrong
Miss Scott	Mrs Beesley	Mrs Rogers	Mrs O’Riley
Mrs Connell	Mrs Lamb	Mrs Harrison	Mrs Lowe

**Site Managers and Cleaners:**

Mr McGough	Miss Layden	Mr Finn	Mrs Baird
Mr McPake	Mr Tears	Mr McDonald	Mrs Roma
Mr Johnstone	Mrs Wilson	Mrs Coburn	Mr Boyle
Mr Longbottom	Mrs Kidd	Mr Keenan	Mr Docherty
Mr Horsefield (Current Site Manager)			

**Clerical Assistants:**

Mrs Graham	Mrs Weathers	Mrs Hopkins	Mrs Bennett
Mrs Strong	Mrs Harrison		

**Dining Room and Kitchen (Not Complete)**

Mrs Brown	Mrs Baker	Mrs Thorburn	Mrs Knox
Mrs Irving	Mrs Blackett	Mrs Ridley	Mrs Hamilton
Mrs Lowe	Mrs Telford	Mrs MacIntyre	Mrs Wall
Mrs Clemintson	Mrs Westmorland	Mrs Parker	Mrs McNarney
Mrs Wright	Mrs R McMillan	Mrs Scholes	Mrs Wilson
Mrs Lamont	Mrs Jefferson	Mrs Docherty	Mrs H McMillan

**Playgroup**

	Current Leader: Mrs L. Sewell	Deputy: Mrs C. McMillan	
Mrs Lovell (Manager)	Mrs Pattinson	Mrs Ripley	Mrs Siddique
Mrs Hewitt	Mrs Arnott	Mrs Hewitt	Mrs Griffiths
Mrs McGlasson (Secretary)	Mrs Sproat (Chair)	Mrs Hather (Treasurer)	Mrs Jefferson
Mrs Tweddle	Miss Storey	Mrs Skinner	Mrs Doyle

And Father Christmas: Mr J. Reardon

**Club Committees**

(Caretaker Committee – From inception to the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting)

Mr McDermott	Mr H Rees	Mr Murray	Mr Swarbrick
Mr Byres	Mr G Rees		

**1<sup>st</sup> A.G.M 28/2/57**

President & Treasurer:	Fr. P. Begley		
Chairman:	Mr Murray	Vice Chairman:	Mr Rees
Secretary:	Mr McDermott (to May 1957)		Mr T. Telford (May 1957 onwards)

**Committee:**

Mr Fisher	Mr Rawson	Mr Renucci	Mr Telford	Mr
Cartner	Mr Kirkbride	Mr Watson		

Presidents:	Fr. P Begley	Fr. G Dakin	Fr. M Gill	Fr. B.A Ashcroft	Fr. T. Quirke
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	Fr. D Darragon				
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Chairmen:	Mr K Phillips	Mr R Wadmore (Current)		
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Vice Chairmen:	Mr E. Gibson	Mr P. Lawson	Mr K. Muir (Current)	
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Treasurer:	Mr W Lewis	Mr K Davis (Current)		
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Secretaries:	Mr T. Telford	Mr R Wadmore	Mr D. Ballantyne (Current)	
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Social Secretary:	Mr J. Honeyman	Mr P. Brock	Mr G. Baird	Mr K. Hargreaves
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	Mr A. Urqhart	Mr G. Coupland (Current)		
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## **7 Acknowledgements**

### **For the photos:-**

**Mr Peter Brock.  
Mrs Yvonne Desborough  
Mrs Nancy Jefferson  
Mr John Reardon**

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Mr Peter Brock.  
Mr Kevin Phillips**

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Mr Nicholas Hughes**

**And anyone else who has helped in any way, but is not featured.**