



## St Mary Magdalene Parish Church

Donegall Pass, Belfast

(Grade 'B' listed building)

Church of Ireland

Diocese of Connor

### A history

1839-2010

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The following article describing a visit to St Mary Magdalene Church, appeared in 'Nomad's Weekly' - 5th May 1906:

*“St Mary Magdalene—What a beautiful name for a church!*

*There is something particularly sympathetic in the very sound of the title, which, if one could rid themselves of the significant associations which cling to the word ‘Magdalene’, would suggest wonderful possibilities. ....”*

**A**s you stroll through the history pages of our beloved church, may you come to experience those possibilities. May you walk with all the parishioners, who have lived and worshipped here over time.

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# Background

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St Mary Magdalene parish was part of the former parish of Belfast, anciently called Shankill, the name given to the civil parish in County Antrim where the town of Belfast began.

At the beginning of the 19th century, there was only one church in the parish to serve the needs of an increasing population—the parochial church in Talbot Street, dedicated to St Anne, and erected in 1778 at the expense of Arthur, first Marquess of Donegall. This church replaced the old Corporation church in High Street which being deemed unsafe, had been taken down the previous year. The church of St Anne's is now St Anne's Cathedral, Donegall Street.

In 1816, a new church, St George's Chapel of Ease was erected in High Street, on the site of the old Corporation church. It was built by subscription aided by a large grant from the Board of Trust Faith.

A new building, which was given the name of Christ Church, was consecrated on 25th July 1833. Rev Thomas Drew was appointed incumbent on the nomination of the vicar of Belfast.

On 4th August 1839, St Matthew's chapel was opened at the parish burial ground at Shankill. This was the first church to be erected under the auspices of the Church Accommodation Society.

On 1st December 1839, the 5th church in the ancient parish of Shankill was opened—this church was to be known as the Magdalene Episcopal Chapel.

On 9th December 1839, following the opening of the new chapel, a meeting of the parochial clergy of Belfast was held at the house of Rev A C McCartney, vicar of St Anne's and the parish at large was divided into several districts. It was arranged that each clergyman had assigned to him a district charge in order to secure the more effectual visitation and oversight of the people.

# The Magdalene Asylum and Episcopal Chapel

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**B**ack in 1838, some individuals and clergy began discussing the possibility of providing an asylum with a chapel attached, for 'penitent females'. At a meeting held in Christ Church school-house on Tuesday 14th May 1838, a Ladies' Provincial Committee was formed—its purpose—to collect subscriptions in aid of the proposed institution. It was to be called the Ulster Magdalene Asylum and Episcopal Chapel. In February 1839, the Down and Connor Church Accommodation Society made its first grant by allocating the sum of £1000 for the completion of the Magdalene Asylum Chapel. Plans for the erection of the buildings, at an estimated cost of £2400, were prepared by Mr William Moore, Architect, Glengall Street, Belfast and the contract for the building of the chapel was entrusted to Mr William Smith.

Built in basilica form with galleries, it was capable of accommodating 763 people, independent of the inmates of the Institution. Its approach was by a series of steps and it had three spacious apartments provided beneath it used as schoolrooms for boys, girls and infants.

The Rev Robert Harvey BA was appointed chaplain and the chapel was opened on Advent Sunday, 1st December, 1839 when the special preacher was the Rev Hamilton Verschoyle, Incumbent of Baggotrath, Dublin. The congregation of Christ Church presented the communion plate, seven collecting plates, the service books and a surplice for the use of the chaplain. At 10 o'clock in the morning of the day of opening, the children of Christ Church Sunday schools walked in procession to the chapel bearing these gifts, which were presented to the chaplain.



J. Rev R. Harvey

One hundred pews were originally set aside as 'rented pews'. In 1843, this was reviewed and rental had to be paid in advance. Advertisements were placed in the 'Northern Whig', 'Ulster Times' and 'Chronicle' newspapers advertising rental. The total income from rented pews amounted to £204 per annum.

Pew rental continued to be paid until it was abolished in 1926, when a freewill offering system was successfully inaugurated. This system continues today.

The asylum, although erected, had not been fully utilised for the purpose for which it was intended, and it was not until the spring of 1849 that it was opened for the reception of inmates. The premises contained dormitories capable of holding 50 beds and one storey of the building was reserved to create another dormitory if needed.

In order that laundering could be carried on in a substantial way, a linen reception area and better facilities were also created.

During the years 1878 and 1879, the church underwent complete repair and redecoration. The old sash windows were replaced by leaded cathedral glass, while the stonework facade was restored.

In 1881, consideration was given to proposed alterations and improvements to the Magdalene asylum. The house was closed on 1st April 1882 for repairs and the inmates were provided either with employment or with shelter in other penitentiaries.

It was not re-opened until 5th March 1883, with accommodation being provided for double the former number of inmates. Every industrial appliance of the best and newest kind had been installed and it was hoped that in a few years the laundry would become practically self-supporting.

During this time, major housing development took place and when it became impossible to accommodate the large influx of people brought into the parish, another church appeared likely to solve the 'problem'. An iron structure, the largest of its kind in Ireland, was to be erected, capable of holding 750 persons. A suitable site was secured in University Street and the Iron Church, as it was known, opened on Saturday, 22 October, 1887.

In 1890 it was agreed to separate the two churches (Magdalene and Iron Church) and so the new parish of All Saints was formed. When All Saints was erected in the late 1890s, the Iron Church was removed to east Belfast and became the church of St Clement's.



2: Magdalene Episcopal Church 1839 (Exterior)



4: (above) Sign outside church showing establishment of laundry in 1849 when it was open for the reception of inmates

(below) Ulster Magdalene Asylum 1881



3: Magdalene Episcopal Church 1839 (Interior)



Pews. After tomorrow the Pews to be let  
to the first applicants—

That the following advertisement be ~~sent~~ inserted  
in the "Northern Whig" and "Edinb Times"  
on Thursday the 16<sup>th</sup> & Saturday the 18<sup>th</sup>  
Current and in the "Chronicle" on  
Saturday the 18<sup>th</sup> & Monday the 20<sup>th</sup> Current.

—Margdale's Episcopal Chapel

The Rev<sup>d</sup>. J. S. Mousell Chaplain—

Persons desirous of obtaining Pews will  
please apply at the Church to the Sexton  
who will attend there daily from 11 till  
3 O'clock on and after Friday next—

By order of Committee

Sam<sup>l</sup> Smith

Wednesday March 15<sup>th</sup> 1843 Secretary

That we meet again (D.V.) on Wednesday  
the 22<sup>d</sup>. Current at 7 O'clock in the Evn<sup>g</sup>.

J. G. G. Chairman—

17.6  
8.9

5: Showing notice of advertisement to be placed for the renting of pews 15th March 1843

# Magdalene Chapel

## Pew Rents

- from 1<sup>st</sup> May 1843 - Payable in advance -

No 1	£ 2.	No 21	£ 2.	No 41	£ 2. -
2	✓ 2.	22	✓ 2.	42	✓ 2. 10
3	✓ 2.	23	✓ 2.	43	✓ 4. —
4	✓ 1. 15.	24	✓ 2.	44	✓ 1. 15. -
5	✓ 1. 10.	25	✓ 1. 15. -	45	✓ 2. —
6	✓ 1. 15.	26	✓ 1. 10. -	46	✓ 2. 10. -
7	✓ 1. 15.	27	✓ 1. 15.	47	✓ 4. —
8	✓ 1. 10.	28	✓ 1. 15. -	48	✓ 1. 15. -
9	✓ 1. 5.	29	✓ 1. 10. -	49	✓ 2. —
10	✓ 1. 5.	30	✓ 1. 5.	50	✓ 2. 10. -
11	✓ 15.	31	✓ 1. 5.	51	✓ 4. —
12	✓ 15.	32	✓ 1. 5.	52	✓ 1. 15. -
13	✓ 10. -	33	✓ 1. 5.	53	✓ 1. 10. -
14	✓ 2.	34	✓ 1. 0. 0	54	✓ 1. 10. -
15	✓ 2.	35	✓ 1. 15.	55	✓ 2. 10. -
16	✓ 2.	36	✓ 1. 15. -	56	✓ 2. 10. -
17	✓ 2.	37	✓ 2. -	57	✓ 2. 5. -
18	✓ 2. -	38	✓ 2. 10. -	58	✓ 2. 5. -
19	✓ 2. <span style="font-size: small;">No Rent</span>	39	✓ 3. 10. -	59	✓ 1. 5. -
20	✓ 2.	40	✓ 1. 15. 0	60	✓ 1. 5. -
<u>32. 15. 0</u>		<u>68. 5. 0</u>		<u>113. 15. -</u>	

6: Record of pew rents - May 1843



# The fire and rebuild

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A fire broke out in the Magdalene church on Saturday 3rd December 1898, completely destroying the belfry and organ. The ceiling was damaged extensively, while the exterior was considerably affected by heat and smoke. The fire was believed to have started in the heating apparatus which was situated in the belfry.

The discovery of the fire by the then Curate, the Rev R C Lapham, undoubtedly not only saved the church from total destruction, but prevented what might have been a terrible catastrophe through the spread of flames to the asylum buildings at the rear of the church.

The prompt arrival of the fire brigade saved the body of the church from destruction, but the damage was so great that the parishioners decided to demolish the building and erect a new structure on the same site.

During the re-building, the Trustees of the Kinghan Memorial Hall in Botanic Avenue and the President and Faculty of the Presbyterian Assembly's College, placed their halls at the disposal of the Magdalene congregation. The new church of St Mary Magdalene was opened and dedicated to the service of God on Saturday afternoon, 20th October 1900, by the Bishop of Down and Connor and Dromore, the Rt Rev Thomas J Welland, DD.

The church, which provides accommodation for about 900 worshippers is built of Scrabo stone with dressings and tracery of Glasgow freestone. Internally bathstone is used with the woodwork being red pine. The windows are filled with lead lights specially designed to harmonise with the style of architecture.

A gallery was built where the present organ pipes are and the inmates of the asylum sat here during church services. This kept them out of view, and therefore avoided whispering amongst other parishioners. A passageway led from the asylum directly into this gallery.

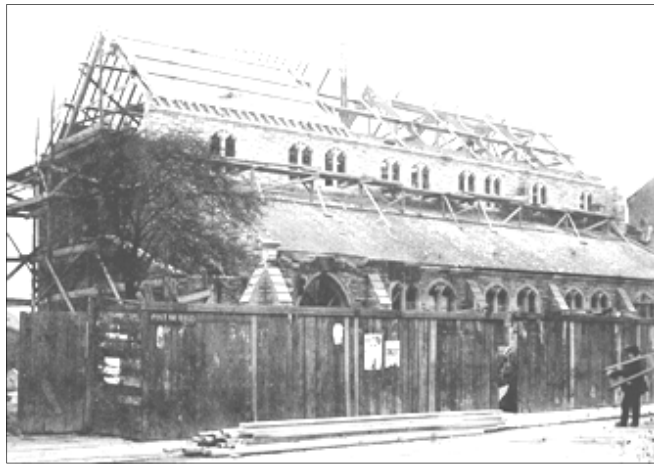
Numerous gifts to the parish were dedicated at the opening service, but of special mention is the brass eagle lectern which is regarded as being one of the finest in Ulster.



*7: Brass Eagle Lectern*



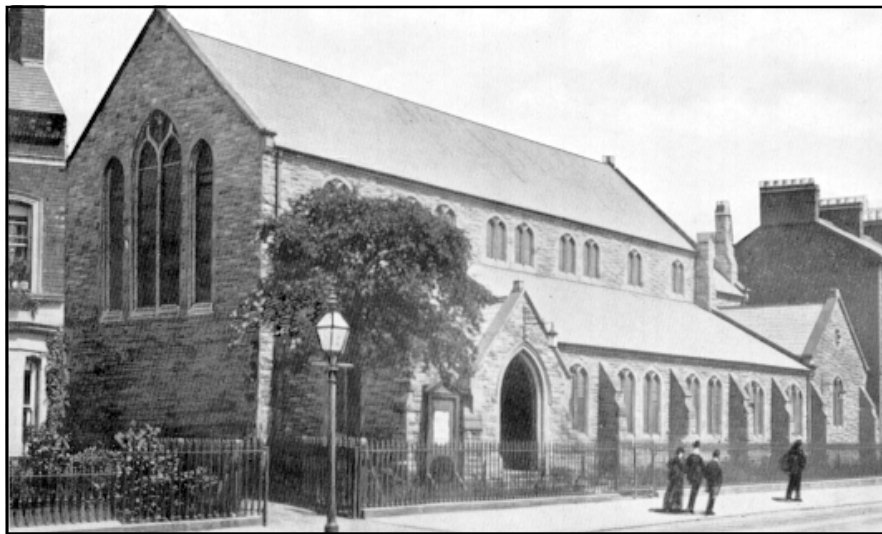
*8: Undergoing construction 1899*



*9: Getting there! —12th May 1900*



*10 : Completed church and asylum—1900*



*11 : Showing the style of the day*



*12: Inside St Mary Magdalene 1900*

During the continuing years, many gifts have been made to St Mary Magdalene in memory of former clergy, parishioners, family and friends. These have taken the form of:

- *stained glass windows*
- *memorial tablets*
- *church furniture and vestments*
- *Holy Scriptures*
- *Holy Communion vessels*

Many of these can be seen on display within the church, and are listed on the church tour leaflet.



Four-light window in the Chancel. The two central lights depict the Good Shepherd seeking and finding lost sheep. The left light illustrates Charity and the right light Peace



Four-light window in the West Gallery. L-R: the visitation of the angel to Mary; the Nativity; Christ in the Temple; the Messiah



Situated above the organ pipes, this window shows the Angel Gabriel blowing his horn.

# Closure of the Asylum

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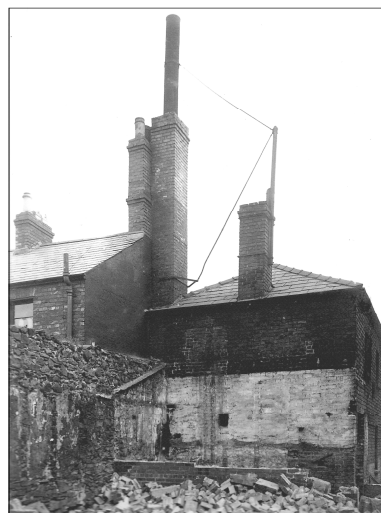
**A**fter the fire of 1898, important changes were also made in the laundry where the most modern equipment and best machinery were installed and steam power applied. During the re-building, the sanitation of the asylum was entirely overhauled in accordance with modern hygienic ideas. Several important and necessary alterations were effected in the living area of the house and the whole building was thoroughly cleaned and painted.

This overhauling of the Magdalene asylum, proved costly and the burden of debt bore heavily on a parish by no means wealthy. A problem which has not gone away!

The asylum had always been regarded as being connected with the Magdalene Parish and because of this, public support and that from sister churches, was not as liberal as perhaps it should have been.

In September 1915, the trustees and select vestry of the parish were finally compelled to recognise that some effort should be made to release them from this ever-increasing burden, and by April 1916 steps were taken to close the asylum, discharge the officials and to provide for accommodation of the inmates. The asylum was demolished in 1918.

The asylum, during its existence from 1849-1916 supplied shelter, maintenance, employment, instruction and encouragement to upwards of 3,000 women, irrespective of religious denomination. Whilst no records of asylum inmates can be traced within the church today, it is possible to view details of inmates by examining the census records available at that time.



*13 : Magdalene Asylum buildings  
photographed in 1918 before  
demolishment and showing backs of  
houses in Howard Street South.*

**CENSUS OF IRELAND, 1901.**  
(The Examples of the mode of filling up this Table are given on the other side.)

**FORM A.** No. on Form B. 532

RETURN OF THE MEMBERS OF THIS FAMILY AND THEIR VISITORS, BOARDERS, SERVANTS, &c., who slept or abode in this House on the night of SUNDAY, the 1st of MARCH, 1901.

No.	NAME AND SURNAME		RELATION TO HEAD OF FAMILY	RELIGIOUS PROFESSION	EDUCATION	AGE (see Instructions)	SEX	RANK, PROFESSION, OR OCCUPATION	MARRIAGE	WHERE BORN	IRISH LANGUAGE	If Deaf and Dumb, Blind, or Lame, or Insane
	Christian Name	Surname										
1	Gilbert	Blakemore	Head of Family	Church of Ireland	Read & Write	36	M	Master	Not Married	Dublin Co. Dub.		
2	Louisa	Lyle	Wife	Presbyterian	Read & Write	28	F	Domestic	Not Married	Co. Dub.		
3	Emily	Widmore	Daughter	Roman Catholic	Read & Write	25	F	Laundry	Not Married	Co. Dub.		
4	Mary	R. Donnell	Daughter	Roman Catholic	Read & Write	23	F		Not Married	Co. Dub.		
5	Emily	Widmore	Daughter	Presbyterian	Cannot Read	21	F		Not Married	Co. Dub.		
6	Margaret	White	Daughter	Church of Ireland	Read & Write	21	F		Not Married	Co. Dub.		
7	Lizzie	Johnson	Daughter	Church of Ireland	Read & Write	20	F		Not Married	Co. Dub.		
8	Maggie	Stewart	Daughter	Church of Ireland	Read only	20	F		Not Married	Co. Dub.		
9	Annie	Wheeler	Daughter	Presbyterian	Read & Write	18	F		Not Married	Co. Dub.		
10	Annie	Leahy	Daughter	Roman Catholic	Read & Write	18	F		Not Married	Co. Dub.		
11	Lizzie	Wadhams	Daughter	Church of Ireland	Read & Write	18	F		Not Married	Co. Dub.		
12	Margaret	R. Donnell	Daughter	Church of Ireland	Read only	17	F		Not Married	Co. Dub.		
13	Thomas	Foran	Servant	Presbyterian	Read only	17	M		Not Married	Co. Dub.		
14	Joseph	Foran	Servant	Presbyterian	Read only	17	M		Not Married	Co. Dub.		
15	Joseph	Foran	Servant	Presbyterian	Read only	17	M		Not Married	Co. Dub.		

I hereby certify, as required by the Act 83 Vic. ch. 6, s. 1 (1), that the foregoing Return is correct, according to the best of my knowledge and belief.

A. Blakemore (Signature of Enumerator.)

I believe the foregoing to be a true Return.  
Gilbert Blakemore (Signature of Head of Family.)

14: Census Records for Magdalene Asylum 1901

**CENSUS OF IRELAND, 1911.**  
Two Examples of the mode of filling up this Table are given on the other side.

**FORM A.** No. on Form B. 574

RETURN OF THE MEMBERS OF THIS FAMILY AND THEIR VISITORS, BOARDERS, SERVANTS, &c., who slept or abode in this House on the night of SUNDAY, the 2nd of APRIL, 1911.

No.	NAME AND SURNAME		RELATION TO HEAD OF FAMILY	RELIGIOUS PROFESSION	EDUCATION	AGE (see Instructions)	SEX	RANK, PROFESSION, OR OCCUPATION	PARTICULARS AS TO MARRIAGE			WHERE BORN	IRISH LANGUAGE	If Deaf and Dumb, Blind, or Lame, or Insane
	Christian Name	Surname							Whether Married, Widowed, or Single	Completed years the present Marriage lasted, if less than one year, write "under one"	Children born alive			
1	Annie	William	Wife	Methodist	Read & Write	50	F	Widow of Magdalene Asylum	Widow	-	-	Dublin City		
2	Flora	William	Daughter	Methodist	Read & Write	20	F	Typist - Clerk	Single	-	-	Dublin City		
3	Ma	William	Daughter	Methodist	Read & Write	19	F	Typist - Clerk	Single	-	-	Dublin City		
4	Mary	Temple	Wife	Irish Church	Read & Write	47	F	Seamstress	Single	-	-	Dublin City		
5	Mary	Temple	Daughter	Roman Catholic	None	29	F	Seamstress	Single	-	-	Dublin City		
6	Thomas	Temple	Servant	Roman Catholic	None	30	M	General Servant	Married	22	6	3	Dublin City	
7	Mary	Montague	Servant	Irish Church	None	40	F	Seamstress	Single	-	-	Dublin City		
8	Lily	Temple	Servant	Irish Church	None	55	F	General Servant	Single	-	-	Dublin City		
9	Mary	Harsh	Servant	Irish Church	None	40	F	General Servant	Married	20	none	-	Dublin City	
10	Joseph	Temple	Servant	Irish Church	None	44	M	General Servant	Single	-	-	Dublin City		
11	Mary	Higgin	Servant	Irish Church	None	38	F	General Servant	Single	-	-	Dublin City		
12	Mary	Holly	Servant	Irish Church	None	37	F	General Servant	Married	32	7	2	Dublin City	
13	Lily	Temple	Servant	Irish Church	None	44	F	General Servant	Married	12	none	-	Dublin City	
14	John	Temple	Servant	Irish Church	None	53	M	Seamstress	Single	-	-	Dublin City		

I hereby certify, as required by the Act 10 Edw. VII. and 1 Geo. V., cap. 11, that the foregoing Return is correct, according to the best of my knowledge and belief.

John Temple (Signature of Enumerator.)

I believe the foregoing to be a true Return.  
Annie William (Signature of Head of Family.)

15: Census Records for Magdalene Asylum 1911



# Magdalene Schoolhouse and Parochial Hall(s)

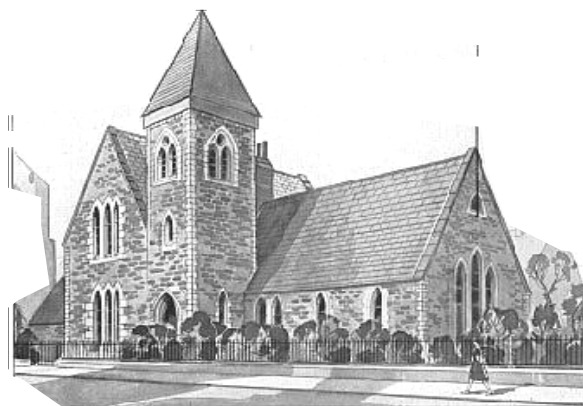
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The Magdalene parochial hall was situated at Shaftesbury Square. It had been originally built as a schoolhouse at the junction of the Dublin Road and Great Victoria Street, the first stone being laid on 5th May 1852. It was opened in February 1853.

In the year 1888 it was decided not to carry on with the day school because of the danger to children owing to heavy traffic in the growing area. The schoolhouse became used solely as a parochial hall.

During the years 1916-17 it was decided to sell the old schoolhouse/parochial hall as it was considered unsuitable because of the distance from the church and the increasing volume of traffic. It was finally sold at the end of 1919 for £5,000, demolished and replaced by a block of shops. Today, the Ulster Bank is located on this site.

A new hall was built on the ground previously occupied by the asylum, immediately behind the parish church. Owing to the high building costs which prevailed during the immediate post-war years, the foundation and corner stones were not laid until December, 1923. Among those taking part in the ceremony was Mr W H McVicker, son of Mr William McVicker who was captain of the 1st Belfast (1st Irish) Company of the Boys' Brigade from its formation in 1888 until his death in 1925. This building is still in existence today.



16: Magdalene Schoolhouse—afterwards the Parochial Hall, Shaftesbury Square



17: The site of the original Magdalene Schoolhouse in Shaftesbury Square c.1853



18: Laying the foundation stone of St Mary Magdalene parochial hall –1st December 1923.

The new hall replaced the building at Shaftesbury Square.

In the background, 3rd left, is the then Bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore, Dr CTP Grierson

In the background, 4th left, is the Rev RCH Elliott, who became Bishop of Connor from 1956-1969

# Charlotte Street Hall

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Charlotte Street hall, fondly remembered by most of our present parishioners was originally erected in 1870 as a schoolhouse. Mrs Mary Hartrick, wife of the Rev E J Hartrick (*Chaplain of the Ulster Magdalene Asylum and Episcopal Chapel from 1846-1880*), was determined to get new school premises, as parents in the neighbourhood said the Magdalene schoolhouse at Shaftesbury Square was "too far off" to send the young children there alone. The new building, which would hold 150 children, was to be an infant school during the day, a night school for young people employed during the day, a mothers' meeting place and for church lectures held by the Incumbent.

Would it be fair to say that Mrs Hartrick was ahead of her time in the development of the current day 'community centre'?

On Tuesday, 11th January, 1870 the foundation stone for Charlotte Street Hall was laid by Mrs Hartrick, in the presence of a large gathering from the surrounding area. On 2nd October 1870, Charlotte Street schoolhouse was opened for daily and Sunday schools, thanks to the tremendous and untiring fund-raising efforts of Mrs Mary Hartrick.

Charlotte Street hall is of course most famous for being the birthplace of The Boys' Brigade in Ireland as it was in this hall that the official enrolment of the 1st Irish Company took place on 31st December 1888.

These premises continued to be in use for various church activities until the 1980s, when due to dwindling needs, Charlotte Street hall was finally closed and the building demolished to make way for new housing. A commemorative stone has been incorporated into the wall of a house where Charlotte Street Hall once stood.

A BB museum, in the design of the Charlotte Street Hall, is being built at Ganaway to house many of the items which make up the history of the Belfast Battalion.



19: Charlotte Street Hall and Schoolhouse

# Magdalene National School

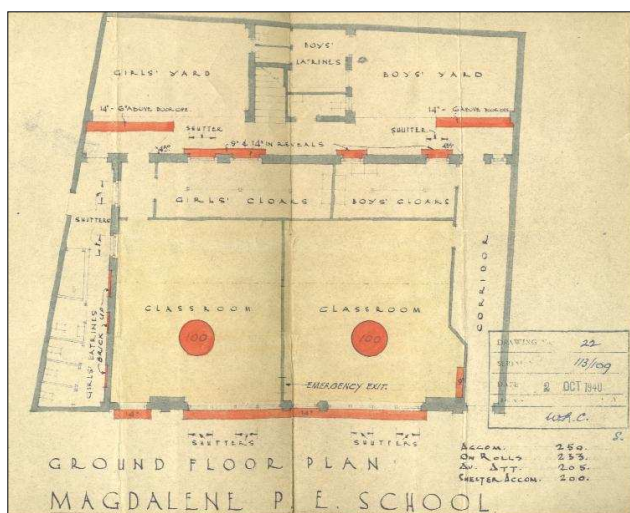
In the year 1890 the schoolhouse in Hardcastle Street was purchased by the parish to be used as a national school. The school supplied a long-felt want in the parish and this was apparent by the large attendance from its opening. The maintenance, though, imposed a heavy burden on parochial funds and more fund-raising activities were necessary. It was formally transferred to the Belfast Education Authority in 1927.

In April 1957, the Magdalene Primary School in Hardcastle Street ceased to function as such and was set to be used as the College of Technology Marine Radio School.

In the 1970s it had to be demolished as it was badly damaged when nearby buildings were bombed and burned.



7: Magdalene School after it became the Marine Radio School



8: Magdalene School floor plan showing modifications made in 1940 for air-raid precautions

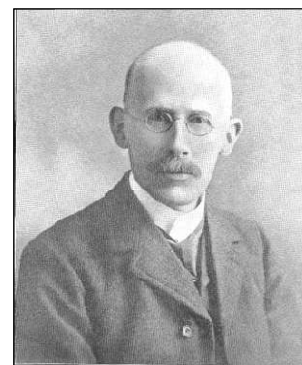
# The Boys' Brigade

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The Boys' Brigade was formed in Glasgow in 1883 by William Alexander Smith and it was not long before this organisation was starting all over Britain. The 1st Irish Company did, of course, originate in our parish church, thanks to the dedication of William McVicker, then the young and enthusiastic superintendent of the Charlotte Street Mission Sunday School. In the summer of 1888, he visited Glasgow to chat with William Smith about The Boys' Brigade starting in Ireland. So enthusiastic was Mr McVicker on the idea, that the official enrolment of the company took place on 31st December, 1888 with 40 boys enrolling. By the years 1890-1891 there were 13 companies in the Belfast Battalion and 9 other companies throughout Ulster. Mr William McVicker had played an important part in this development.

In the summer of 1892, the first camp for boys was held at Killough, Co Down, in a granary kindly lent by Lord Bangor. Another pioneering first for the BB. Camps were held in subsequent years, but with the growth in membership, The Belfast Battalion purchased land at Ganaway, Co Down and the Battalion Camp was introduced. As has been mentioned earlier in this booklet, a BB Museum, in the design of the Charlotte Street Hall, is being built at Ganaway to house many of the items which make up the history of the Belfast Battalion.

Mr McVicker remained captain of the 1st Irish for more than 36 years, until his death in 1925. Despite partial blindness for 20 years, with periods of total blindness and severe illness, he remained an active officer until the end. He lived up to the motto "Sure and Stedfast".



22: Mr William McVicker

On Sunday, 29th October, 1933 the Battalion Colour was handed over to St Mary Magdalene.

During the 1980s, partially due to the Troubles and the reduction in parish numbers owing to people moving away from the Pass, the 1st Company of the Boys' Brigade was transferred to St Columba's Parish, Knock, where it was staffed by former members of St Mary Magdalene.

In 1997 the 1st was returned to its rightful home, under the leadership of Bill McMillan and his staff.

A service of thanksgiving was held in 1988 to mark the centenary of the founding of The Boys' Brigade in Ireland. The Magdalene was packed to capacity, with the overflow in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit. In the congregation were Alderman Dixie Gilmore, Lord Mayor of Belfast and other members of Belfast City Council.

Over the years, past members of the "1st" have played their part in the commerce and politics of the city and province and many look back to their time spent in the Company as the time when the training they received started them on their journey through life. Many captains have served the needs of The Boys' Brigade and we are indebted to their faithfulness in the advancement of Christ's kingdom among boys.

No account of the BB in St Mary Magdalene would be complete, without paying tribute to the late James W Boden, who as a boy and an officer served in the 1st for over fifty years. He was Captain on two occasions—from 1949-1964 and again from 1979-1983. His portrait hangs in the BB room of the Parochial Hall.

## Brownies and Guides

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**I**t was not until the year 1920 that the 25th Belfast Guide Company was formed. We still have members of our congregation who remember the time spent with the "25th".

During the 1950s and '60s the Brownies were thriving. Girls became Brownies at the age of seven and left at 11 to join the Guides. There were so many girls they had to split into two Packs, A and B. Most of the girls later became Guides, with some then progressing into Rangers.

Regretfully, due to falling numbers, the 25th Belfast Guide Company was forced to close in June 1984.

On Sunday, 19th February, 1995 a service took place to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the company. It was attended by many former Guides who had belonged to the parish, along with many "old BB boys".

## Other Organisations

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**U**p until the 1980s, St Mary Magdalene was filled to capacity and was the social life of the local community. In addition to The Boys' Brigade, Girl Guides and Brownies, Youth and Badminton Clubs thrived, together with Men's Clubs, Ladies' Guild, Mothers' Union and Bowling Clubs for the adults. Sadly, the Troubles brought many of these to a close, but to this day a thriving Ladies' Guild and Men's Snooker Club exist. Every Thursday, a short church service is

held in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit after which lunch is served in what has become fondly known as the 'Magdalene Bistro'. This has proved to be very successful and a wonderful form of outreach to all members of our community.

## Outreach

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However, the quest to reach out to members of the community thrives within the parish. The Rev Adrian McCartney has recently been appointed as Outreach Coordinator for the parish. A very successful programme of outreach was organised over the summer of 2010 and we have every faith that this will bear fruits within the new generation of families living in the parish area.

# Chapel of the Holy Spirit

**I**n 1979, thanks to the hard work and generosity of Mr William T Scott, his wife Agnes, and other parishioners, what was the original church room, off the church, was refurbished to become 'The Chapel of the Holy Spirit'. It was dedicated by Rt Rev Arthur H Butler, Bishop of Connor.

In 2006, the chapel was repainted and a new Altar Frontal, Pulpit Fall and Bookmarkers purchased. It was rededicated on Sunday 3rd September 2006 by the then Rector, Rev Robin H Moore.

The chapel is used regularly for evening and lunchtime worship and is a sanctuary for private prayer and reflection.



23: Chapel of the Holy Spirit

## Chapel of the Holy Spirit

The Chapel and its furnishings were dedicated by the  
Bishop of Connor the  
Rt. Rev. Arthur H. Butler, M.B.E., D.D.  
on Sunday 20th May 1979  
- to the Glory of God -

and in memory of

Richard Ashby ~ Margaret (Daisy) Boden ~  
Ethel Craig ~ William Graham ~  
Robert H Hardy ~ the McComb family ~  
Robert Patterson (Senior) ~  
the Robinson family (Vernon Street) ~  
and is the outcome of work done and contributions made by  
many parishioners and friends.

24: Chapel of the Holy Spirit—inscription



# A grouped parish—2007

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**I**n 2007, faced with the dwindling number of parishioners many parishes, especially in the Belfast inner city area, the Bishop of Connor Alan Harper (now Archbishop of Armagh) decided that something had to be done to safeguard the existence of these parishes. Negotiations began at diocesan level and it was decided to ask these smaller parishes to amalgamate consequently sharing the financial burden.

The Parish of St Mary Magdalene was earmarked for amalgamation with St Aidan's, Sandy Row, resulting in what is known as a 'grouping' of the two parishes. Both churches continue to have their own services, select vestries and separate financial accounts, but share joint ministry. This has marked a new era for both parishes and we look forward to future opportunities to work together in the continuance of God's work.

# Chaplains and Rectors who have served the parish

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Date	Name
1839-1841	Robert Harvey, BA
1841-1842	Thomas Fitzwilliam Miller, MA, BD, DD
1843-1846	John Samuel Bewley Monsell, BA, LLB, LLD
1846-1880	Edward John Hartrick, MA
1880-1908	Walter Ridall, MA, DD
1908-1926	George Alexander Stephenson, BA, LLD
1926-1940	William James Gransden, MA
1940-1956	William John Robinson Benson, BA
1956-1969	Michael Roycroft, MA
1969-1991	William Henry Lendrum, MA
1991-1993	Vacancy
1993-2001	Alastair Mallon, MA, BTh
2001-2003	Vacancy
2003-2007	Robin Hugh Moore, BEd, BD
2007-	Terence P Kerr, BD, MPhil

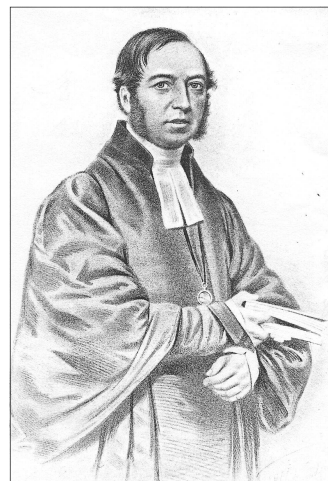
# Interesting facts

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The parish boasts a number of famous connections—both within the clergy and lay people who have made a significant impact on the wider community of Belfast and beyond.

Among these, is one of the most famous hymn writers in the Irish Church—Rev John Samuel Monsell, BA, LLD who was chaplain of the Ulster Magdalene Asylum and Episcopal Chapel 1843-46. He was also Chancellor of Connor during the years 1847-1853. Some of his most famous and well-loved hymns are:

- *Christ is risen, Halleluiah*
- *I hunger and I thirst*
- *Lord of the living harvest*
- *Father, blessing every seed-time*
- *Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*
- *Fight the good fight with all thy might*



25: Rev John S Monsell  
1811-1875

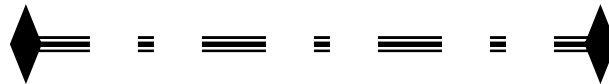
Another famous writer was Dean Charles Thomas Ovenden, BA, BD, DD, curate of this parish during the years 1870-1872. He was a talented musician publishing music, anthems and hymns. Perhaps he is best known for the hymn 'Thou art my God' based on Psalm 63.

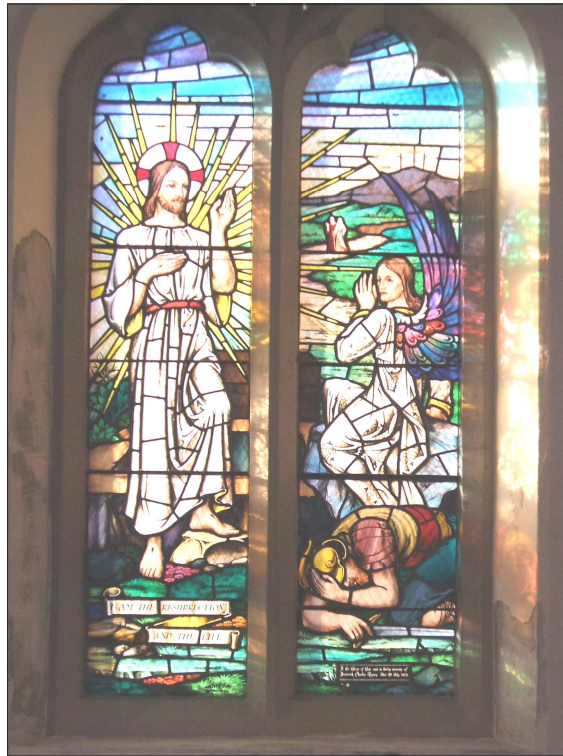
## Former parishioners of St Mary Magdalene who have been ordained into the Ministry of Christ:

- *Rev Canon David Brown*
- *Rev Paul Houston*
- *Rev Canon James Monroe*
- *Rev Canon William Moore*
- *Rev Geoffrey Withers*
- *Rev Michael Withers*

Lay persons:

- *Dr Norman Ainley—originally practised medicine in Belfast. In 1956, he was appointed assistant pathologist in Bradford, England. At that time, the viral disease smallpox was on the increase. Tragically Dr Ainley died in 1962 at the age of 37 from contracting this disease, after carrying out a post mortem on a child who had (unknown to him) contracted smallpox. This child was believed to have been the first victim of smallpox in Bradford. An account of Dr Ainley’s work can be downloaded from:  
[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2449039/pdf/ulstermedj00072-0034.pdf](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2449039/pdf/ulstermedj00072-0034.pdf)*
- *Charles Cunningham Connor MA JP, Mayor of Belfast 1889-1891. Member of Parliament for North Antrim 1892-1894.*
- *Alderman Dixie Gilmore, OBE—former Lord Mayor of Belfast*
- *Mr J Mellon—a gifted musician and artist. On the death of his uncle, the owner of William Bridgett & Sons, regalia manufacturers of 106 Gt Victoria Street (known locally as ‘Bridget the Banner Painter’), took over the business and continued to paint banners for the Loyal Orders throughout the province.*
- *Mrs Betty Norman, well-known in drama circles throughout the city.*
- *Mr Fred Purdy of Purdy and Mullard (Building Contractors) after whom Purdy’s Lane at Knockbreda is named.*
- *Currently we are very proud to have Miss Leila Webster, a well-known name in Ulster theatre, as a member of our congregation and Ladies’ Guild.*





Two-light window in the Nave North Aisle showing the glory of the Resurrection. Mary Magdalene can be seen in the background, alongside Mary, the mother of James

Our much loved church has been standing in Donegall Pass for over 100 years—let us hope and pray it stands for another century, exalting the glory of God in the inner city. We have come through good times and bad, happy times and sad, but "the Magdalene" will forever live in the hearts of all who have worshipped here.

**Sources:**

- A history of the Church of Ireland in St Mary Magdalene Parish, Belfast by W S Leathem;
- A history of the Parish St Mary Magdalene Belfast 1939-1989 by JW Boden, M Cartwright, S McCarthy, T McCarthy, M Wright;
- St Mary Magdalene Select Vestry Minutes
- St Mary Magdalene Trustees Minutes
- South Belfast—George Templeton and Norman Weatherall
- 1961 Street Directory

*Compiled and written by:*

Cecil Dunwoody, Catherine Irving and Jacqueline Stephenson with thanks to Raymond Moore for information and guidance regarding The Boys' Brigade

# Mary Magdalene

*I stood and watched Him dying on the cross at Calvary  
I tried to close my eyes and feel His pain.  
I thought of my old life, what Jesus Christ had done for me  
How could He leave me, how could I remain?*

*I bowed my head in sorrow, feeling lost and feeling shame  
My dearest Friend now dying on the Cross  
To never see Him any more nor speak His Holy Name  
I never thought I'd know such dreadful loss.*

*And when it was all over and the Master cried aloud  
I could not bear to see them bring Him down  
His agony was over, His head was gently bowed  
The 'King of all the Jews' who wore no crown..*

*I watched His grave to guard Him but alas on that third day  
At morning's break I stared in disbelief  
For someone had been to the tomb and rolled the stone away  
My Lord had vanished – taken by a thief.*

*I stumbled blindly from His tomb, I wanted now to flee  
When met a man who spoke to me and said  
'Do you not know me Mary?' - it was glorious ecstasy  
As I knew my Lord had risen from the dead.*

***Halleluiah!***

*written by Jacqueline Stephenson,  
parishioner of St Mary Magdalene, Easter 2006*