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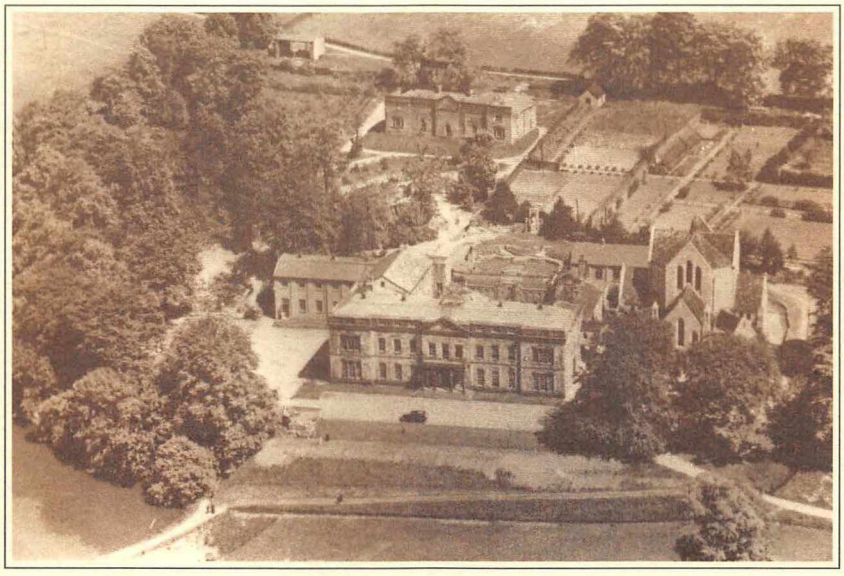
PETER ROEBUCK

The Foundation Decade at Shrigley

Seminary, Church & Shrine 1929-1939



LAS – ROMA

For
Fiona, Thomas & James

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PREFACE

Throughout the western world a decline in religious belief and practice was a persistent feature of the later decades of the twentieth century. This had numerous causes and has had manifold consequences. The latter, still in progress, include a severe reduction in the number of men and women wishing to become priests, brothers or nuns in religious life. Nowhere has this been more marked than in the Catholic Church in Britain, which is now struggling to cope with an acute shortage of clergy, and whose seminaries and their inhabitants are dwindling rapidly. All this contrasts sharply with the situation which pertained during the early and middle decades of the twentieth century, when religious houses in Britain and those engaged in training there grew steadily in numbers as Catholics gradually became more accepted and self-confident, and began to play a more prominent role in the life of their largely Protestant country.

The case study which is the subject of this book is drawn from this earlier era of expansion and optimism. Based upon a very full collection of contemporary records, it deals with the foundation of the junior seminary for boys established by the Salesian Congregation in 1929 at Shrigley Park, near Macclesfield in Cheshire, and with its development during the course of the decade leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War. The venture was an ambitious and substantial one; and until the exigencies of war blighted its future prospects, it met with considerable success. The College recruited widely throughout Britain and Ireland. Shrigley Hall, already a large and imposing property, was substantially re-modelled and extended. The single most challenging of many projects was the building of a magnificent church: this was dedicated to St. John Bosco who had founded the Salesians in mid-nineteenth-century Italy; and it was designed and overseen by Philip Tilden, among the most successful British architects of his day. This particular achievement was among the more striking elements in the development of an isolated and highly unusual way of life at Shrigley: a way of life which left a permanent mark on Tilden, who was a periodic visitor; which, there and nearly everywhere, is now defunct; but which, thanks to unusually rich archives, is re-created here.

I alone am responsible for the views expressed and the conclusions reached below, though colleagues too numerous to mention individually, but to whom I am nonetheless deeply grateful, provided me with very helpful comments on earlier drafts. However, in the course of my work I have accumulated even larger debts which I gratefully acknowledge but cannot readily repay.

Fr. Michael Winstanley S.D.B. was my earliest source of encouragement and assistance. Among other things he introduced me to Fr. John Dickson S.D.B. who has been an unfailing source of help, both at home and abroad, and whose book, *The Dynamics of Growth: The Foundation and Development of the Salesians in England* (Rome, 1991), was the inspiration and indispensable starting-point for my efforts.

Fr. George Williams S.D.B. facilitated my entry to the Salesian Central Archives at Via della Pisana in Rome, whose archivists could not have been more generous in their efforts on my behalf. Fr. Bernard Grogan S.D.B. went out of his way to supply me with material once I had left Rome. As Provincial in Britain during the course of my work Fr. Francis Preston S.D.B. has encouraged me throughout. My endeavours in the British Provincial Archives in Stockport were greatly assisted by Fr. Charles Garrick S.D.B. and later by Fr. Patrick Sherlock S.D.B. Indeed, I am deeply grateful to the entire community at Stockport for their hospitality on several occasions, especially during an extended visit there in August 2003. Other Salesians, notably Fr. John Hoey S.D.B. (now deceased) and Fr. A. Carette S.D.B., freely shared with me their personal recollections of life at Shrigley during its first decade.

I am grateful to the Rt. Revd. Brian M. Noble, Bishop of Shrewsbury, for granting me access to his diocesan archives. Canon John P. Marmion and his staff generously assisted my searches among these archives, held at St. Joseph's Primary School in Birkenhead. My colleague, Dr. H. Mawhinney, smoothed my entry to the British Architecture Library at the Royal Institute of British Architects at Portland Place in London, which holds a significant cache of Tilden manuscripts. I am grateful to Ruth Karmen, Director, and Sir Banister Fletcher, Librarian, for granting me access to this archive: their staff expertly guided my work and introduced me to a number of secondary sources which I might otherwise have overlooked.

Mrs. Brigid Dorling gave me hospitality during the earlier stages of my work and Mrs. Anne Woolmer provided me with a number of expert translations from Italian into English. I am indebted to them both for these further marks of our long friendship.

I am particularly grateful to a number of other individuals. Mr. Nigel McDowell provided me with the professional skill needed to deal with Shrigley's rich photographic archive and at very short notice Mr. Killian McDaid made the maps. My colleague, Cheryl Cunningham, produced innumerable versions of this work at its various stages with her customary patience and skill, whilst also expertly managing all the other business of a very busy office. In the midst of many other onerous duties another colleague, Mr. Brendan Kelleher, furnished me with a meticulously detailed commentary on the entire text, thereby saving it from many infelicities and much else besides. From start to finish my friends in Manchester, Mike and Helen Kilduff, have given me assistance and support in a host of ways, without which, quite simply, this work would not have been completed. My wife, Fiona, has done likewise for many years but in no venture to greater effect than this.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to Don Francesco Motto S.D.B., Director of the Istituto Storico Salesiano in Rome, for agreeing to publish this book, and for his indispensable assistance and care in bringing it safely and securely into print.

Larkhill,
Portstewart,
N. Ireland

January 2004

Chapter One
INTRODUCTION

The Salesians were founded in northern Italy in the mid-nineteenth century by a formidable priest, Don Bosco (from 1934 St. John Bosco), who named them after his own favourite Saint, Francis of Sales. From a very poor rural background, Don Bosco devoted his vast energy and considerable talents throughout a long career to rescuing, rehabilitating and training the young, male, and often delinquent poor. Via the Salesian Congregation he created a disciplined army of priests and brothers dedicated to this work in Italy, elsewhere in Europe and overseas. A parallel Congregation of Salesian Sisters, with similar objectives for girls, was also established, by Mary Mazzarello. Both grew rapidly and spread relentlessly, not only in Western Europe but also internationally. Salesian missionaries, the first of many sent to a variety of destinations, departed for Latin America in 1875. For almost forty years thereafter, until abruptly curtailed by the First World War, the Salesian Congregation and many other Catholic religious orders participated vigorously in the hectic process of European expansion overseas.

The common, indeed ubiquitous image of the First World War is of hundreds of thousands of soldiers being bogged down and monotonously slaughtered in trench warfare in the muddy fields of Flanders. Geographically, however, the impact of the War was far more widespread than this image suggests. International trade in particular, whose growth in extent and complexity had characterised the half century before 1914, was not only severely disrupted but substantially curtailed: many main sea lanes were not safe, or not regarded as such. Inevitably, the economies of the major European powers were increasingly dominated by a strategic and domestic imperative to meet the needs of the war effort. International trade, exchange and travel, which had burgeoned almost uninterruptedly since 1850, fell into sharp decline and, along with many other features of pre-war development, missionary activity in the Catholic Church was profoundly disrupted and substantially set back. Movement between and across continents became more difficult and much less common than it had been for decades past. Yet once peace was re-established and despite the acute problems associated with post-war readjustment, the onset of fresh growth in missionary endeavour was swift and sustained, and was powerfully promoted by two major anniversaries in the 1920s: the tercentenary of the establishment of the Propaganda Congregation, and the centenary of the Association for the Propagation of the Faith. A major Missionary Exhibition at the Vatican in 1925 was merely the most publicly orchestrated manifestation of this burgeoning enthusiasm for evangelical activities overseas.[1]

[1] *Salesian Bulletin* (hereafter *S.B.*), Vol. XIV, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1922), pp. 166-172; Vol. XVI, no. 2 (March-Apr. 1924), p. 52; no. 5 (Sept.-Oct. 1924), p. 131; Vol. XVII, no. 2 (March-Apr. 1925), pp. 39-45; no. 5 (Sept.-Oct. 1925), p. 145.

The Salesians made a very significant contribution to this resurgence. They grew dramatically in numbers during the Rector Majorship of Don Philip Rinaldi (1922-31), from c.6,000 to c.10,000 members, with over 250 new houses being founded in various parts of the world. The Salesians also celebrated their own special anniversary in 1925: the Golden Jubilee of their first missionary endeavours, marked principally in that year by an International Congress in Buenos Aires, but also, and more importantly, by a Missionary Exhibition at their headquarters in Turin in 1926. These major events were practically underpinned by foundations which were explicitly designed to produce a new generation of missionaries. As early as 1922 Don Rinaldi opened the Cardinal Cagliero Institute at Ivrea, named after the leader of the first Salesian missionary effort half a century previously; and there were other similar establishments – at Penango in 1925, at Foglizzo in 1926, and later at Gaeta, Bagnolo, and Cumiana (this last for lay-brothers), and at Rebaudengo in Turin, all in Italy. Shrigley followed in England in 1929 and Coat-an-Doc'h in France in 1936. An expansion in the number of Salesian overseas missions ensued: at Porto Velho, Brazil, in 1926; at Madras and Krishnagar, India, and at Moyasaki, Japan, in 1928; and at Ratbari, Siam, in 1930.[2] These were but the most striking of contemporary developments to be added to existing commitments, and they were followed by others.

This was the international context for the establishment in 1929 of the Salesian Missionary College, a junior seminary, at Shrigley Park. The development was justifiably regarded by the Salesians as a major departure in the evolution of the Anglo-Irish province, then comprising Britain, Ireland, Malta and South Africa. In the first place, if the Congregation in Britain and Ireland and in the province as a whole was ever to achieve self-sustained growth, it seemed essential to open a junior seminary. To rely randomly on recruits from Salesian secondary schools was too precarious a basis for development. Furthermore, although the Salesians were enjoying rapid expansion worldwide, it was clear to contemporaries from Rector Major Rinaldi downwards that this international growth needed to be underpinned by an increasing supply of English-speaking Salesians. There were growing numbers of Italians, Spaniards and other continental Europeans, but the key strategic demand was for missionaries who were fluent in English. So the proposal to open Shrigley was not merely approved: it was actively promoted and strongly supported from Italy and, indeed, in view of the keen, continuing interest at headquarters, probably originated in Turin. In the customary annual letter to co-operators in Britain and Ireland, published in the *Salesian Bulletin* (the chief means of communication with lay supporters) of January-February 1931, Don Rinaldi declared:

[2] M. WIRTH, *Don Bosco and the Salesians* (New Rochelle, New York, 1982), pp. 266-267. This edition is based on a translation by David de Burgh of the original edition, which was published in Turin in 1969.

> one thought that was ever in our mind was that of providing missionaries for the many territories confided to us where the English language is spoken, and now the Salesian Missionary House, dedicated to the Blessed John Bosco, has been opened at Shrigley.[3]

The new venture met with virtually instant success. Within a couple of years, there were over 150 aspirants at Shrigley, drawn from northern England, Scotland and Ireland, a figure that was broadly maintained for the remainder of the decade. A good proportion of these young men remained with the Congregation, serving not only in Britain and Ireland but also in a wide variety of locations abroad. There was a need to bolster provincial endeavours but a significant number of those who attended Shrigley in the 1930s eventually proceeded elsewhere and overseas.[4]

The venture was led by a cosmopolitan and charismatic group of variously talented men: two Italians, Fr. Aeneas Tozzi, the Provincial since 1926, and Fr. Angelo Franco, from 1930 the first Rector of the new establishment; a Maltese, Fr. Joseph Ciantar, appointed Vice-Rector in 1929; and several other Italian, Irish and English confreres. Remarkably, it was substantially financed by an Argentinian Salesian of Swedish Protestant extraction, Fr. Adolfo Tornquist. In addition to the discharge of core business – the formation and education of junior seminarians – they transformed Shrigley from a sleepy neo-Palladian pile, home to the last incumbent of a minor English gentry family, into a crowded and lively establishment, housing not just a resident Salesian community and a host of boys, mainly from working-class backgrounds, but for several years clerical trainee-theologians too. At certain junctures the full complement approached 200, far in excess of the numbers accommodated in later decades (see Appendix). The atmosphere was not just optimistically up-beat but vibrant and dynamic, partly due to the quality of the leadership and the fact that the venture was bravely new; but also because it took hard, pioneering work to transform the establishment from one conventional function to something radically different. A succession of substantial capital projects (in which everyone engaged at one time or another) proceeded throughout the decade, helping to generate a unique spirit.

Chief but far from alone among these was the building of a magnificent church. Ultimately, this towered above the adjoining Hall, itself a fine edifice, and commanded a magnificent view across the Cheshire plain towards Manchester. This was always intended to be not merely a church but a major project, no less than a national shrine to St. John Bosco. It would scarcely have been surprising had the Salesians engaged for this venture a humdrum ecclesiastical architect,

[3] *S.B.*, Vol. XXII, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1931), p. 2.

[4] Those alumni who became religious, whether as Salesians or otherwise, are listed in Salesian Provincial Archives, Stockport (hereafter SDB.GB) SH/III/65, '1929-1959, Shrigley's 50th Anniversary Booklet', 31 Jan. 1979.

well-versed in the traditional requirements of contemporary English Catholics. Instead they commissioned Philip Tilden, an Anglican and one of the most fashionable and successful architects of his day, among whose previous clients had been many of the rich and famous, yet who had never previously been asked by any denomination to design a church, still less a shrine.

The church and shrine were eventually completed and formally opened in the early summer of 1938 and very quickly won national recognition. Organised by the national newspaper *The Catholic Herald*, a Peace Pilgrimage of 21 May 1939 had three focal points: Dunfermline in Scotland, Walsingham in the south of England, and the Salesian Missionary College at Shrigley. A few months later this early promise, and that of Shrigley as a whole, was blighted by the outbreak of another international conflict. Tilden's career, which had risen meteorically after the First World War, rapidly fell into abeyance in the 1930s, and he came close to bankruptcy. It was the project at Shrigley which bridged his most difficult years and saw him through to the new professional equilibrium which he achieved during and after the Second World War. He was profoundly affected by his experience at Shrigley and remained close to the Salesians, and some of them to him, for the rest of his life.

The tapestry of this foundation decade is richly-textured. Fortunately for the historian, it is also recorded in great detail: in a very full House Chronicle, tribute to an immensely valuable Salesian tradition; in extensive and extraordinarily literate, province-wide *Salesian Bulletins*, written in English but printed in Italy, and very characteristic of their day; and in a variety of other records from a range of sources in Britain and abroad. This book provides details of this remarkable story, and of its various sequels, and concludes with some reflections on their broader implications and significance.

Chapter Two

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Loosely translated from Old English, the original meaning of the word 'Shrigley' was 'a woodland glade where missel-thrushes sing'.[5] This gives a rather misleading impression of the property acquired by the Salesians in 1929, which was somewhat remote, situated in the far south of Cheshire on rising ground bordering the moorland of the north Derbyshire Peak District. As was common in early medieval times, the first known family to own land at Shrigley took their name from the place where they lived. Very little beyond this is known about the Shrigleys other than that around 1300 their land passed, probably by marriage, to the Downes family.

Through further acquisitions over succeeding centuries the Downes became the most prominent landowners in that part of Cheshire. By the early nineteenth century the Shrigley estate, which incorporated the nearby village of Pott Shrigley and its Anglican church (originally St. Mary's but later St. Christopher's) ran to some 1,700 acres. Inheriting it in 1791 but dying childless in 1819, the last male Downes, Edward, did most to shape the Park at Shrigley purchased by the Salesians. He diverted the public road from its age-old route which was much closer to the Hall; and engaging in extensive landscaping like many of his contemporaries, it was almost certainly he who created the two lakes in the grounds. Unfortunately, these and other expensive improvements drove him into debt which, coupled with the economic recession which followed the Napoleonic Wars, forced him to sell out in 1818.

The new owner was William Turner, the youngest of four brothers from Blackburn in Lancashire, all of whom grew rich from the calico (white cotton cloth) printing industry which they established there. William lived for a few years in the rambling old medieval Hall at Shrigley, built by the Downes family, with its numerous gables and mullioned windows, nothing of which now survives. Then, employing Thomas Emmett of Preston as his architect, he built a new Hall to the sort of neo-classical design which had been fashionable for almost a hundred years. This substantial, rectangular, northward-facing edifice was completed in 1825 and formed the core of the later Salesian Missionary College.

Almost immediately, in 1826, Shrigley came briefly but dramatically to national prominence, at least in the gossip columns. William Turner's only child, a

[5] C. LEWIS & R. KEMSLEY, *Shrigley Hall: Hotel, Golf and Country Club* (Shrigley, n.d. but c. 1999), p. 4. Unless otherwise stated, the material in this section is based on this publication, which is drawn from R. KEMSLEY, *'The Forest of Macclesfield'* in *The Victoria Country History of England: Cheshire*, Vol. VI. forthcoming.

fifteen-year-old daughter, Ellen, was abducted from her school in Liverpool. Then, via a tissue of lies about her father's supposedly declining financial circumstances, she was persuaded to marry the thirty-year-old Edward Gibbon Wakefield, then an employee of the British embassy in Paris, at the infamous blacksmith's shop at Gretna Green in Scotland. Some years earlier Wakefield had eloped with an orphaned heiress, who bore him two children before dying in 1820, leaving him with a sizeable fortune. In the midst of this second escapade, Ellen Turner and Gibbon Wakefield were apprehended at Calais. She was retrieved and he was tried in 1827 and sentenced to three years in prison.[6] Nevertheless, although apparently unconsummated, their marriage was valid under Scottish law and it required no less than the passage of a private Act of Parliament by William Turner to annul it. A year later Ellen married her father's wealthy neighbour, Thomas Legh of Lyme Park, who was twenty years her senior. In 1830 this marriage produced a daughter, Ellen Jane, but her mother died in childbirth in the following year, still aged only nineteen.

This vivid scandal erupted during William Turner's year-long appointment as High Sheriff of Cheshire, blighting his public as well as his private life. He went on to serve for several terms and with considerable distinction as one of the Members of Parliament for his native Blackburn. Not surprisingly in view of this continuing public commitment to his roots, he never severed his links with his industrial interests, and he lived only intermittently at Shrigley. No doubt to his further disappointment, he was unable to pass on his property in Cheshire to a male heir. When he died in 1842, the Hall and estate passed to Ellen Jane, his only grandchild, who had been reared at Lyme Park by her elderly father. And it was through Ellen Jane's marriage to the Rev. Brabazon Lowther in 1847 that the property passed into the hands of the family from whom the Salesians bought Shrigley Hall and the immediately surrounding estate in 1929.

Brabazon and Ellen Jane Lowther produced three sons and a daughter and lived quietly and apparently very contentedly at Shrigley as minor landed gentry till Brabazon's death in 1877. This, the only period when a young family grew up there, saw the building of two modest, single-storey wings at right angles to the main front of the Hall. In her widowhood Ellen Jane lived on alone at Shrigley till 1906 when she was succeeded by her then only surviving son, William Lowther, a colonel in the Royal Artillery who, having served in the Ashanti wars, left the army to return to his family home. His four children were already grown up by that stage and there were no further alterations to the Hall, except for the installation, still evident, of lush plasterwork in parts of the entrance hall and in the front rooms. William was pre-deceased by three of his sons, while the fourth

[6] Gibbon Wakefield eventually went on, somewhat improbably in view of these early adventures, to a distinguished career as a political scientist and colonial statesman (*Dictionary of National Biography,* Vol. XX, pp. 449-452).

was determinedly uninterested in the life of a country gentleman.[7] In any case, following Lloyd George's pre-war introduction of death duties and in the wake of the severe post-war depression, it had become increasingly expensive to maintain private houses and estates of such size, and a great many were sold during the period of Colonel Lowther's incumbency.[8] This too was Shrigley's fate, though it stood empty for a year after his death in 1928 before being acquired by the Salesians.

[7] Years later this last son, Brabazon Lowther (having by then changed his name to Francis Huntingford and become a Monsignor) was in correspondence with the then Rector of Shrigley, Fr. A. Winstanley S.D.B. (SDB.GB.SH/III/38-42, Oct. 1956 – Jan. 1957).

[8] See F. M. L. THOMPSON, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1963), pp. 292-345 and R. STRONG, M. BINNEY & J. HARRIS, *The Destruction of the Country House*, (London, 1974). In the Salesian Archive at Stockport is an album (SDB.GB.SH/V/I) of 16 photographs from the 1920s showing the Hall (interior and exterior) and Park as they were under the Lowthers just before the purchase of Shrigley by the Salesians. Five of these are reproduced in M. KILDUFF, *Shrigley 1929-2004* (Coleraine, 2003), hereafter KILDUFF, *Shrigley 1929-2004*, pp. 17-20.

Chapter Three
THE ACQUISITION OF SHRIGLEY BY THE SALESIANS

Precisely when the search for a property for the new foundation got under way is uncertain. The first evidence dates from late October/early November 1928 when the Provincial, Fr. Tozzi, was in correspondence with Hugh Singleton, Bishop of Shrewsbury, seeking the customary permission to establish a junior seminary in his diocese. The property which Tozzi had in mind at this stage lay much further to the south than Shrigley, somewhere between Market Drayton and Norton Hales in Shropshire. Bishop Singleton was frank about the two considerations which weighed most heavily with him. Firstly, while he welcomed the plan to found a junior seminary, he indicated his unwillingness to allow a boarding school rather than a seminary. In other words he did not want one objective to be diluted into another. The Brothers of Christian Instruction already ran a boarding school at Pellwall Hall, near Market Drayton, 'and it would not be fitting that I should sanction another such in the neighbourhood'. Secondly and predictably:

> one restriction I would deem necessary is that your Fathers should not canvas the diocesan schools for subjects for your Society [*sic*]. I would have no objection to your receiving any who might offer themselves [but] naturally we would wish to have a first choice for ecclesiastical studentships for the diocese ... I would not wish any detriment to existing schools such as the novitiate for the Christian Brothers at Carlett Park near Birkenhead, and the Brothers of Christian Instruction at Pellwall Hall.

He added emolliently that he did 'not think there is likely to be any clashing of interests'.[9] Formal permission to proceed on the aforementioned terms with this unspecified property in the south of the diocese was granted shortly afterwards, on 16 November 1928.[10]

The available evidence fails to reveal why or when this prospect was discarded in favour of Shrigley. Tozzi and other colleagues before him had encountered serious difficulties with diocesan authorities in South Africa.[11] In view of this he may have concluded that Bishop Singleton's caveats would prove more problematical at the original location, though a letter to Turin of 26 November

[9] SDB.GB.SH/III/1, Singleton to Tozzi, 1 Nov. 1928.

[10] SDB.GB.SH/III/2, Same to same, 16 Nov. 1928.

[11] See W. J. DICKSON, *'War, Racism and Immobility: the Social Impact of the Early Salesian Work in Cape Town', passim* in F. MOTTO, ed., *L'Opera Salesiana dal 1880 al 1922: Significatività e Portata Sociale,* Vol. II, *Esperienze Particolari in Europa, Africa, Asia* (Rome, 2001).

enthusiastically described it as 'the best one ... of two good places'.[12] More prosaically, the two parties concerned in the proposed transaction may have failed to agree terms. Whatever the truth of the matter, less than two months later, on 23 January 1929, an offer which at some earlier point Tozzi had made for Shrigley was formally accepted, 'subject to contract'.[13]

For vendors the prevailing economic conditions could not have been worse: it was very much a buyer's market, and there can be little doubt that the Salesians got a bargain. In addition to the large Hall with its gardens, greenhouse and potting shed, there was a Lodge, a substantial coach-house and a stable block, several cottages and a variety of ancillary agricultural buildings, all set in some 260 acres of land. Colonel Lowther's executors put this on the market for £12,500 but accepted Tozzi's offer of £8,000 without undue delay.[14] Nonetheless, after the outline deal was struck but before the formalities had been completed, problems arose in relation to some of the current agricultural tenancies on parts of the estate. In outlining these Tozzi's solicitor assured him that, if the deal fell through because of these difficulties:

> there are so many properties being offered for sale all over England that I do not think you need have any fear but what [sic] you would be able to find another one. For instance, I enclose a cutting from the back page of yesterday's *Times* where a castle in Glamorgan is offered ... [for] ... £4,000. Numerous bargains of this kind are daily to be found in *The Times* and in *Country Life*.[15]

These tenurial problems were in due course resolved and the keys to the property were handed over on site in the last week of June 1929.[16] Tozzi stayed long enough to say Mass in the House on 24 June and to bless the buildings.[17]

Long before then, however, indeed as early as 27 January 1929, Tozzi had assured his superiors in Turin that:

> We have bought a good place - 'Shrigley Hall' – between Macclesfield and Manchester, in touch with four dioceses: Shrewsbury, Salford, Leeds and Nottingham, not far from Liverpool and from the Archdiocese of Birmingham where most of the Catholic population is only a few miles distant. We

[12] Salesian Central Archives at Via della Pisana, Rome (hereafter ASC), Tozzi to unknown in Turin, 26 Nov. 1928.

[13] SDB.GB.SH/III/3, Constable & Maude, Auctioneers etc. London, to Tozzi, 23 Jan. 1929.

[14] Details of the property are contained in SDB.GB.SH/III/6, 'Particulars of Fire Insurance drawn up by the Executors of Colonel W. G. Lowther', 27 May 1929.

[15] SDB.GB.SH/III/4,5, Gibson, Usher & Co., Solicitors, London, to Tozzi 31 Jan. and 17 Feb. 1929.

[16] SDB.GB.SH/III/7, Meller, Speakman & Hall, Land Agents etc., Manchester, to Tozzi, 22 June 1929.

[17] *S.B.*, Vol. XXI, no. 5 (Sept.-Oct. 1929), pp. 151-152.

> are in the heart of Catholic England: it is the most strategically situated place available – in a few hours you can be in Glasgow in Scotland as well as other Catholic centres. The people are a mix of English and Irish – they are lively, hard-working and motivated.[18]

Here Tozzi was in the full flush of early enthusiasm. Few contemporaries would have endorsed his bald summary of regional ethnic heterogeneity, while topographically his description was somewhat fanciful too. Shrigley was not to become readily accessible until the use of cars became widespread several decades later. As late as 1949 Tozzi's successor as Provincial, Fr. Frederick Couche, referred to Shrigley as an 'isolated spot in the heart of the country',[19] a description with which most would have agreed. Nonetheless, except for a secondary school at Thornleigh in Bolton, opened in 1925, all the other Salesian foundations lay in the south of England. Shrigley bolstered the Congregation's position in the north where the majority of English Catholics then lived. More significantly, although this may not have been as keenly appreciated at this point as it was to become before too long, via various sea-crossings from Liverpool, Shrigley was relatively close to Ireland, and to what was to become, and for a decade to remain, a major source of recruits.

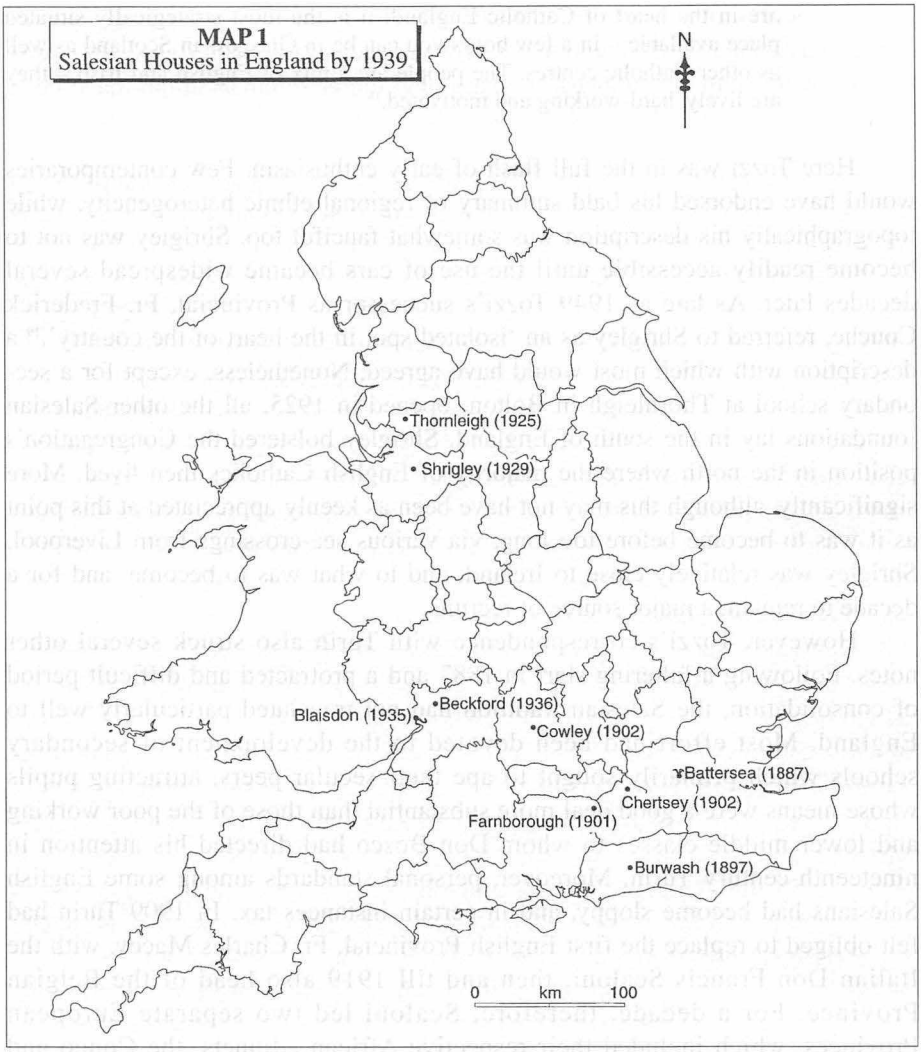
However, Tozzi's correspondence with Turin also struck several other notes. Following a faltering start in 1887 and a protracted and difficult period of consolidation, the Salesian tradition had not translated particularly well to England. Most effort had been devoted to the development of secondary schools which primarily sought to ape their secular peers, attracting pupils whose means were a good deal more substantial than those of the poor working and lower middle classes to whom Don Bosco had directed his attention in nineteenth-century Turin. Moreover, personal standards among some English Salesians had become sloppy, and in certain instances lax. In 1909 Turin had felt obliged to replace the first English Provincial, Fr. Charles Macey, with the Italian Don Francis Scaloni, then and till 1919 also head of the Belgian Province. For a decade, therefore, Scaloni led two separate European Provinces, which included their respective African adjuncts, the Congo and South Africa; and this throughout the very difficult years of the First World War. When he died in 1926 Turin thought it prudent to bring in Tozzi from South Africa as his successor.[20]

Moreover, despite the strong growth in clerical recruits which followed the war, Tozzi felt that matters at the heart of the Anglo-Irish province were still not in good order. His comments in early 1929 were forthright indeed:

[18] ASC, Tozzi to Don Ricaldone in Turin, 27 Jan. 1929.

[19] SDB.GB.PROV/VIS/IV/Shrigley 21-31 Aug. 1949.

[20] W. J. DICKSON, *The Dynamics of Growth: The Foundation and Development of the Salesians in England.* (Rome, 1991), *passim* (hereafter DICKSON, *Dynamics of Growth*).



> I am in the process of doing the Provincial Visitations and am finding some improvements … Chapter Meetings are taking place. The lower orders are much improved – it is the superiors who are unsatisfactory: they are lacking in numbers and in training, and above all do not have the religious and Salesian background … It is the Salesian life which we wish to implant here. But everything grows slowly in this climate … now is the time to act. If we do not save ourselves in the next decade, it will become almost impossible as far as we humans can see. Our hope lies with the young.[21]

[21] ASC, Tozzi to Don Ricaldone in Turin, 27 Jan. 1929.

Not necessarily unduly pessimistic, these comments were certainly uncompromisingly frank. Also, in enthusing over the acquisition of Shrigley Tozzi was at pains to forestall any suggestion that a new junior seminary might have been attached to the school at Thornleigh, near Bolton, founded so very recently:

> From this house it is easy to communicate with Bolton – a house which did not have this help which is so necessary from the start. It will take us years to give it a Salesian atmosphere: it is much easier to set up an additional one and make it do well.[22]

There were, therefore, several layers of consideration beyond the relatively straightforward locational and business features of the transaction through which the Salesians acquired Shrigley. The new foundation was viewed as potentially of profound significance partly because as a junior seminary it would further rejuvenate the ranks of the Anglo-Irish province; partly because it would contribute strategically to the Congregation's international endeavours, by producing a fresh flow of English-speaking Salesians; but also and not least because it would generate the true Salesian spirit so singularly lacking, Tozzi thought, elsewhere in England. The burden of initial expectation, therefore, was very heavy. In the eyes of its founders Shrigley was always meant to be special.

Proof that these convictions were shared in Turin lies in the identity and background of the three men who were chosen to drive this new project forward. None of them was English and all had very close connections with the tap-roots of the Congregation. Tozzi himself was made of very stern stuff. Born in 1875 in Lugo in the province of Ravenna, he went as a boarder at the age of ten to the Salesian school at Faenza. Two years later he first met Don Bosco, who eventually convinced him that his future lay with the Congregation, which he joined as a novice in 1891. Following his ordination in 1897 he was sent to England where he served as Novice-Master at Burwash till 1901 (the predecessor of Fr. Simonetti who subsequently presided till 1959). Tozzi was then moved to South Africa where, for a quarter of a century, he re-established the Salesians, saving them from bankruptcy, before being recalled to England as Provincial in 1926.[23] If not exactly a veteran by that stage, he was battle-hardened and utterly dependable – someone in whom Turin felt it could place absolute trust.

In Fathers Joseph Ciantar and Angelo Franco the Provincial had two extremely able, charismatic and complementary deputies on the ground at Shrigley. As a teenager Ciantar had been to confession to Don Bosco's successor, Don Rua, 'who told him that he was meant to be a Salesian'. He never looked back. After four years as a seminarian in Malta and Turin he came to England where he

[22] ASC, Tozzi to Don Ricaldone in Turin, 27 Jan. 1929.

[23] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Fr. Aeneas Tozzi.

served as assistant to Simonetti at Burwash until his ordination in 1920. Thereafter he went to the Salesian school at Cowley in Oxford, winning a sterling reputation for his work among the young apprentices at the nearby Morris-Oxford car plant.[24] He was at Shrigley right from the start, as Vice-Rector, and his ambassadorial efforts were utterly fundamental to its early success.

Franco, who joined him a year later as Rector, was among the most academically distinguished and internationally experienced of contemporary Salesians. A native of Cantavenna (Alessandria) in the Italian Piedmont, he was born in 1885 and as a teenager studied at the College of St. Charles of Borgo St. Martino, the continuation of the Mirabello, the first Salesian school to be founded outside Turin. He entered the Salesian noviciate at Foglizzo in 1900, and then went to Turin–Valsalice before completing a degree in philosophy at the Gregorian University in Rome. Don Rua then asked him to work in the United States, where no doubt he acquired his command of English. He returned in 1910, acting as Secretary to Don Rua's successor, Don Albera, before his ordination in the following year. He then obtained a doctorate in Theology in Turin, worked in various Italian houses, and was subsequently obliged to serve in the Italian army from 1915-18. Don Albera asked him to proceed to England after the war where he was successively a member of the Salesian communities at Burwash, Cowley and Battersea before coming north to Shrigley in 1930. Of all the Salesians in the Anglo-Irish province it was he, apparently, who argued most forcefully for the establishment of a junior seminary in England, and he was Tozzi's travelling companion in the search for a suitable property in the late 1920s.[25]

With Tozzi at the provincial helm, Ciantar and Franco constituted a powerfully effective duo of subordinates. Travelling the length and breadth of Britain and Ireland in search of aspirants, Ciantar 'brought home the bacon'; whereupon, according to their joint testimony, Franco 'cured it'.[26]

[24] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Fr. Joseph Ciantar.

[25] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Fr. Angelo Franco.

[26] DICKSON, *Dynamics of Growth*, pp. 226-227. Ciantar was originally sent to England following an appeal by Franco to Turin for help with the formation of aspirants. Ironically, Ciantar was available because his earlier nomination as Rector of St. Patrick's in Malta had been turned down by the colonial administration on the grounds that he was not British. The partnership between the two men, therefore, long pre-dated their arrival at Shrigley.

Chapter Four

THE BEGINNING: THE EARLY PROJECTS

It was Fr. Michael Murray, together with two would-be aspirants from the Salesian school at Cowley, who arrived at Shrigley at 5 p.m. on 7 August 1929 to establish community life there.[27] Unsurprisingly, Murray had been hand-picked by Tozzi. An Irishman from Waterford, he had served in the Royal Navy 1915-18 before joining the Salesians in 1922, following a brief flirtation with the Jesuits at Campion Hall in Oxford. Two years later he proceeded to Lansdowne in South Africa where he did his practical training and theological studies before being ordained in Cape Town in December 1928.[28] Thus, Tozzi had spotted his energy and street wisdom early on and had stuck by his judgement over a three-year gap in their regular acquaintance. Despite Fr. Murray's absolute lack of experience as a superior, Tozzi appointed him to the senior position of Fr. Prefect at Shrigley, responsible for the business and administrative aspects of the new foundation.

During the first week his tasks were very mundane – basic carpentry, the reconnection of the gas supply, and the acquisition of miscellaneous goods and furniture, some of it being obtained (no doubt through Tozzi's influence) from the Italian firm of Arighi Bianchi of Macclesfield. The Provincial and Fr. Franco began brief visits on 14 and 15 August respectively, whereupon 'work began in real earnest'.[29] Ciantar had already been about his business and the first contingent of boys was expected in mid-September.

On 16 August Tozzi interviewed a local builder, Mr. Clayton, whose firm was subsequently to work at Shrigley into the 1960s, but whose first major tasks were to instal lavatories, baths and a new system of central heating, all of which were completed during the autumn. Meanwhile, much timber was bought for church benches, study desks and the like.[30] Additional confreres arrived, including from Cowley as cook, another Italian, Bro. Lawrence Biello. In view of the amount of practical work to be completed he was soon joined by two other lay-brothers, James Cogan and Felix Rudolfini. There were three clerical brothers, Andrew Russell, John Ryan and William Tait; and to add to Ciantar and Murray one other priest, Edward Goy, who provided a further link with the earliest days of the Salesian Congregation.[31] Born at Borgarello, Pavia, in 1871, Fr. Goy was ordained in Turin in 1897 and soon afterwards was sent to England by

[27] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 7 Aug. 1929.
[28] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Fr. Michael Murray.
[29] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 9, 14-16 Aug. 1929.
[30] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 29 Aug. & 4 Sept. 1929.
[31] *Elenco Generale della Società di S. Francesco di Sales*, 1930.

Don Rua. After various posts (including senior ones such as Provincial Secretary and Provincial Economer) at Battersea, Burwash, and Cowley, and at Warrenstown in Ireland, he was – as his obituary puts it – posted to Shrigley as one of the 'shock brigade'. His formal position was Confessor but he was also an elder statesman and undoubtedly a confidant to both Franco and Ciantar, as well as being a multifarious handyman - a very competent mechanic, electrician, plumber and gardener.[32]

Led for the first year by Ciantar as Vice-Rector, it was, therefore, a small but carefully balanced community which greeted the first cohort of boys, c. 50 strong and mainly from Ireland, who arrived on 19 September together with 'some mothers'. On the following day they were 'all over the place' and, having immediately noted the two lakes in the grounds, their chief demand was for fishing tackle. By the time Tozzi visited again on 27 September they had undergone initial tests and been divided into two sections, 'higher and lower', or in terms of forms, Preparatory and Grammar.[33] Business was well and truly under way, though for much of the decade it had to be pursued amidst builders, other tradesmen and their rubble. Years later one aspirant described Shrigley to his parents as 'a bit like Buckingham Palace, only smaller'.[34] It was a very large country house indeed and needed substantial adaptation, which could only be conducted in stages over an extended period.

At the end of the first winter, with a second and additional intake of boys scheduled for September 1930, it was clear that a large new dormitory was required and Clayton duly presented his plans for this major extension in May 1930.[35] The entire top (and third) floor of the main building, capacious but low in stature, had previously been a shooting gallery, where Colonel Lowther had perhaps re-lived some of his military experiences in Africa. Clayton proposed to lift the roof of this third storey along the entire frontage in a complex operation in two stages, involving the use of huge tarpaulins to keep out the elements. This challenging task was completed in time for the second intake in September 1930, though initially the boys had to use candles for light, which no doubt posed a considerable threat to their health and safety; though by then too the quality of their drinking water and the sanitary arrangements had both been substantially improved.[36]

[32] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Fr. Edward Goy.

[33] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 19-21, 23, 27 Sept. 1929.

[34] Oral Testimony, M. Kilduff (Shrigley 1953-59).

[35] SDB.GB.SH/III/13, 'Plan and Drawing of Approximate Elevation of West Front showing proposed new Dormitory by J. C. Ltd.', 22 May 1930.

[36] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 12 May & 16 Sept. 1930; *SB* Vol. XXI, no. 4 (July – Aug. 1930), pp. 106-107, 122. Kilduff, *Shrigley 1929-2004*, p. 25. See also 'Shrigley, 1929-43: Its Foundation, Growth Considered Year by Year, Events of Note, Activities' (hereafter 'Shrigley 1929-43 – Events of Note), pp. 1-2. This typescript, by an unknown author or authors, is in the possession of Mr. M. Kilduff, Archivist of the Shrigley Old Boys' Association.

At that stage Shrigley was generally lit by gas. One of Ciantar's early coups was to persuade the Catholic Laymen's organisation, the Knights of St. Columba, whose Grand Master visited Shrigley on 23 and 24 March 1930, to assist the College with a general conversion to electricity. The plan took a considerable time to implement but was ultimately successful. In June 1930 surveyors came from Stockport to take measurements and in the following October:

> Immediately after dinner, armed with new picks, spades and shovels, the whole school, the Rector included [Fr. Franco had recently taken up his post] march[ed] down to the lake to build a wall.

This and a series of further working parties succeeded in banking up one end of the larger and higher of the two lakes to produce a fall of water sufficient to drive hydro-electric plant. The necessary machinery was finally installed in October 1933 and provided power until the College was connected to the public supply in February 1935. From the start the resulting earthworks were known as Ciantar's Dyke![37]

Meanwhile, several other projects had been completed or were under way with the community and the boys providing a great deal of the basic labour for clearing sites in support of Clayton and his men. Preparatory work on the largest of these commenced in December 1930. The single-storey wing to the east of the main front was raised 'to form another dormitory (for lay aspirants) and provide six rooms for confreres'[38]; and even more ambitiously a new two-storey building was then erected at right angles to this to provide a chapel on the ground floor and yet another dormitory above it. Always envisaged as temporary pending the building of a church and shrine, the chapel was dedicated to the two sixteenth-century English martyrs, John Fisher and Thomas More; and the dormitory above to Bishop Versiglia and Fr. Caravario, two Salesians recently martyred in China. Work had progressed sufficiently for the foundation stone to be laid on 10 May 1931 by Fr. Adolfo Tornquist, the College's main benefactor, who had just returned to Europe from a world tour of Salesian missions undertaken at the behest of the Rector Major.[39] According to Tozzi

[37] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 23-24 March 1930; 20-21 June 1930; 2, 7-8 Oct. 1930; 9 Dec. 1930; 17 Oct. 1933; 2 Feb. 1935. *S.B.* Vol. XXIII, no. 1 (Jan-Feb. 1931), pp. 15-18. The last reference, in the *Bulletin*, provides an extended description of the visit to the province of the eminent Polish Salesian, Cardinal Hlond. One of his tasks on visiting Shrigley on 15-16 October 1930 was to inaugurate the new lighting system. 'The Rector told the Cardinal to say the magic words "Fiat Lux". He did so, pressed the button, but nothing happened ... "damp" had caused a faulty connection [and] they had to be content with gas-lighting for the rest of the visit'. Next day the Cardinal visited a Polish Catholic church in Manchester, where he 'received the following telegram from Shrigley ... "*et lux facta erat*" ...'. There were, however, further breakdowns until the installation of new machinery in October 1933 proved successful.

[38] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 22 Dec. 1930; 'Shrigley 1929-43 – Events of Note', p. 2.

[39] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 30 April, 8-10 May 1931; *S.B.* Vol. XXIII, no. 4 (July-Aug. 1931), pp. 103-104.

writing in the *Salesian Bulletin*, the cost of this major project, estimated at some £6,500, amounted to about half of what had already been spent on the acquisition of Shrigley and the earlier projects. Work had to proceed rapidly across the summer because, having exceeded 50 in 1929 and 100 in 1930, admissions were confidently expected to rise sharply again. In fact the entire building came into use from the beginning of the third school year in September 1931, when 162 boys (153 clerical aspirants and 9 lay aspirants) enrolled.[40]

The next area to receive attention was on the outside of this new complex, overlooking the larger of the two lakes. By early 1932 the boys were hard at work there with 'picks and shovels, barrows and hammers'.[41] This space was popularly known as the Oval, no doubt because of its shape. It was eventually cleared, levelled and floodlit to form an ancillary playground to the inner quadrangle. During the course of this work some stones were lifted which had originally formed part of the ancient house occupied by the Downes family. These were now put to good use as part of 'a monument [which] was built', to the north of the Oval and at the front of the House, 'for the reception of a statute of the Venerable Dominic Savio', an early pupil of Don Bosco's. Of Carrara marble, the statute was the gift of Mr. Albert Rowland of Oxford, a 'great College friend'. It was unveiled by Ambrose Moriarty, Auxiliary Bishop of Shrewsbury, on 23 June 1933.[42]

In terms of physical development the two following years were particularly busy. A large study hall, designed to hold the entire school and only much later divided into three classrooms, was built to the south-west of the main house; and 'improvements to the adjacent corridor and bathrooms were carried out at the same time'.[43] To provide adequate shelter in inclement weather, of which there was plenty in Shrigley's northern upland location, an ambulacram was raised around the internal quadrangle formed naturally by the configuration of the main buildings.[44] A rockery was created to the east of the Oval; playing fields were laid out; and improvements were made to outlying parts of the house and to the farm buildings.[45] In 1934-35 the kitchens were 'almost completely rebuilt' and before the boys returned for session 1935-36 'a new kitchen range' was installed.[46] Perhaps most ambitiously of all in that it involved only internal labour, a massive Terrace dedicated to the Sacred Heart was built to the

[40] *S.B.,* Vol. XXIII, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1931), p. 177.

[41] *S.B.,* Vol. XXIV, no. 2 (March-April 1932), pp. 41-43.

[42] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 8 March & 23 June 1933; *S.B.,* Vol. XXV, no. 4 (July-Aug. 1933), pp. 97-100, 108-109; Vol. XXVII, no. 3 (May-June 1935), p. 71. 'Shrigley 1929-43 – Events of Note', p. 2 is incorrect in ascribing this development to the summer of 1932.

[43] 'Shrigley 1929-43 – Events of Note', p. 3; Kilduff, *Shrigley 1929-2004*, p. 29.

[44] *Ibid.*

[45] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 19-22 Feb. & 14 Dec. 1932; *ibid.*

[46] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 1 Aug. – 7 Sept. 1935; *ibid.*

south of the House, overlooking the quadrangle. Bishop Moriarty declared this open on 20 June 1936.[47]

Far more was spent on these developments than on the original purchase of the Hall and estate. By September 1934, Tozzi reported that he had spent £24,000 on the venture, long before any significant expenditure on the church.[48] Precise details of how this and later outlays were funded have not survived, though undoubtedly Fr. Adolfo Tornquist played a key role. Tornquist's father had emigrated from Sweden to Argentina in the late nineteenth century. He had developed large industrial and financial interests there, including the Banco Tornquist, and had eventually become a Deputy in the Argentinian National Assembly. Adolfo was sent to preparatory school in England and qualified as a civil engineer. He then spent some time with the Salesians in New York, where, however, he was ordained a secular; and on returning to Europe he became Secretary to the first Salesian cardinal, the great missionary, Giovanni Cagliero. Professed as a Salesian in 1922, he subsequently invested his considerable personal wealth in their foundations all over the world, including the Theological College at the Crocetta in Turin, and Shrigley.[49] Although he made only fleeting appearances at Shrigley, they were significant. On 15 October 1929 he came 'with £1,000' and by the 24th December was promising to 'send [further] money next month'. As we have seen, he laid the foundation stone of the chapel/dormitory extension in 1931; he spent his summer holiday at Shrigley in 1936, just before the final phase of building work on Tilden's Church began; and he attended the opening of the new Church and Shrine in 1938.[50] In the *Salesian Bulletin* of January-February 1931 he was acknowledged as the person 'through whom the Missionary House at Shrigley was founded'[51] and he was centrally acknowledged in the brochure published to mark the 25th anniversary of Shrigley in 1954. Apparently deeply influenced by Cardinal Cagliero, Tornquist was among the major promoters of Salesian missionary activity overseas, and one source suggests that it was he above all who pressed his superiors to establish a Missionary College in England.[52]

[47] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 5 Feb. 1934 & 9, 20 June 1936; *ibid.* The newspaper cutting reproduced in Kilduff, *Shrigley 1929-2004*, p. 31 wrongly dates the opening as on 21 (rather than 20) June.

[48] ASC, Tozzi to Don Gusmano in Turin, 16 Sept. 1934.

[49] DICKSON, *Dynamics of Growth*, pp. 247-248.

[50] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 15 Oct. 1929, 8-11 May 1931, 4 Sept. 1936 & 24 July 1938; SDB.GB.SH/III/8, Marconigram, Tornquist, Cairo, to Tozzi, 24 Dec. 1929.

[51] *S.B.*, Vol. XXIII, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1931), p. 5.

[52] SDB.GB.SH/IV/A/10, 'Souvenir Programme: Celebrations for the Silver Jubilee of Shrigley 1929-54 and the Canonisation of Dominic Savio', 30-31 Oct. 1954. While Tornquist's visits were a source of great encouragement, a significant number of other eminent Salesians visited Shrigley during the very early years, further testimony to the keen interest with which Turin viewed its development. The first to arrive was Don Binelli, who as a novice had been 'clothed' with his cassock by Don Bosco. He was followed by Archbishop Guerra, Cardinal

Nonetheless, despite Tornquist's beneficence, the new foundation was established against a background of continuous financial difficulty. The prime reason for this was that there was a very small core income stream or at least none that was in any way commensurate with Shrigley's recurrent expenditure. Most of the boys came from poor backgrounds and their families paid little, if anything, towards the cost of their stay at the College. The most explicit evidence of this comes from the early 1950s, well beyond the foundation decade. At that stage no fees were stated, let alone charged. Some thirteen or fourteen boys passed on the '£37 a year tuition fees' which they received through their 'county councils'. Income from the remainder averaged about £25 a year in the form of 'offerings from parents'.[53] Fifteen to twenty years earlier, in the midst of severe and widespread economic hardship, this element of recurrent income is likely to have been much less than this. Thus, while we do not know how much it amounted to, Tornquist's money was indispensable: the tasks involved in adapting Shrigley Hall to its new way of life could not have been contemplated without it. And as for more routine matters, there were two additional sources of income: contributions from other Salesian Houses, channelled through Provincial headquarters; and the fruits of Ciantar's efforts to conscript an army of benefactors and co-operators.

By their personal hard labour the community and the boys made persistent, indeed Herculean, efforts to keep both capital and recurrent costs to a minimum. A very great deal of the non-specialised work involved in all these early physical developments was done by the boys, supervised and joined by various members of the community. It was entirely in the Salesian tradition for activity of this kind, together with all the more mundane domestic work, to form part of the everyday routine, though there was much more to do at Shrigley than in other establishments. Nor did the boys contribute merely to the work in and around the main buildings. In addition they were involved in the laying-out of the sports-fields, in the development and maintenance of an extensive fruit and vegetable garden, and in the creation of a cemetery (where the four boys who died during this decade were buried).[54] Periodically they also worked hard on the farm. In the aftermath of the First World War English farmers were hard-pressed as international competition drove down prices. However, animal husbandry was less se-

Hlond and Archbishop Tanna, and later by Don Candela and Don Serie, each of whom conducted formal canonical visitations, the former of the theologate and the latter of the seminary (SDB.GB.SH/I/3,– this last entry being dated only by the month).

[53] This information comes from a discussion of Shrigley at a meeting of the Rectors at Battersea on 6 June 1954, a summary of which is among the Ainsworth Papers in the Provincial Archive (SDB.GB.PROV./AINS/II/16).

[54] J. MURRAY, '*Personal Memoir of Shrigley 1935-40, 1941-43*', in possession of M. Kilduff, Archivist, Shrigley Old Boys' Association (hereafter MURRAY, 'Personal Memoir'), p. 1; KILDUFF, *Shrigley 1929-2004*, pp. 26-27, 31, 33, 38-39, 46, 58-59, 117.

verely affected than cereal farming and during the 1930s government intervention increasingly protected domestic agriculture.[55] The farm at Shrigley was non-cereal and a substantial undertaking with numerous cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry, together with associated fodder crops and potatoes, and work there on a variety of tasks was part of everyone's seasonal routine.[56] It is scarcely surprising that this youthful, energetic and disciplined workforce later played a significant role in the erection of Philip Tilden's church.

[55] LORD ERNLE, *English Farming Past and Present* (Sixth Edition, London, 1968), with Introductions by G. E. Fussell & O. R. McGregor, pp. lxxix-cxlv, 449-472.

[56] MURRAY, '*Personal Memoir*', p. 1; KILDUFF, *Shrigley 1929-2004*, pp. 51-56.

Chapter Five

LOCAL REACTIONS

The dramatic change of circumstances at Shrigley was scrutinised as closely as could be by local people in the village of Pott Shrigley and the nearby town of Bollington, who clearly wondered what was going on there and who occasionally came to incorrect conclusions. Junior seminaries, tucked away in relatively isolated locations, were rare phenomena; and while sizeable Catholic communities were in this instance not that far away, the immediate vicinity of Shrigley was a Protestant area with a large majority of Anglicans and Methodists. Contemporary attitudes to Catholicism were a good deal less benign then than now, and the new foundation aroused suspicions and occasionally fell foul of false rumours. The fact that some of the Salesians were not British and that many of the boys were Irish probably served to heighten local sensitivities.

Against the background of Fr. Murray being perhaps the best known member of the community, if only because he had been attending a series of agricultural lectures in Bollington,[57] a startling example of local rumour-mongering occurred in the first school year. On 19 May 1930 the chronicler recorded:

> There is a report in Bolling[ton] of a big fight in the College. "The boys would not obey Mr. [*sic*] Murray. A fight ensued. Mr. Murray [is] in hospital but not near Bollington in case the news should leak out." This was caused by several boys visiting the doctor for minor treatments which required conspicuous bandages. The boys were actually stopped in the road and asked if there had been a fight.[58]

Two days later one of the clerical Brothers had to visit the doctor with a poisoned hand which also required a bandage. This raised further suspicions and he too was asked about 'the fight'. When on 23 May he and another Brother went to Bollington to buy flowers, speculation reached fever pitch: with the implication that there had been fatalities, some local people suspected that they were 'buying flowers for wreaths'.[59]

Earlier, on 8 January 1930, the new venture at Shrigley had been the subject of a short, benign notice in the *Manchester Guardian*[60] which, however, provoked a critical riposte from 'Shrigleyite' in the *Macclesfield and East Cheshire Observer* of 24 January. According to this dismayed correspondent, 'during the past

[57] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 10 Feb. 1930.
[58] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 19 May 1930.
[59] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle 21 & 23 May 1930.
[60] *Manchester Guardian*, 8 Jan. 1930 (SDB.GB.SH/III/9).

few months the timber fellers [at Shrigley] have been very busy cutting down a great number of beautiful trees' to the detriment of an estate much prized locally.[61] The Chronicle amply substantiates this charge for the periods both before and after it was made. The boys were at work clearing trees in November 1929; and although much timber for use in alterations and furniture was purchased, when fellings were counted in December it was found that 'more has been taken than bought'. More felling took place in late January, and tree trunks were used in the construction of 'Ciantar's Dyke' in October 1930.[62] Such activity did not make for good public relations, though slowly but inexorably the effects of this initial bad press were overcome.

Of course Salesians in the English part of the Anglo-Irish province were used to operating in a sceptical, if not hostile, environment: at local, regional and national levels narrow bands separated antagonistic, tolerant and positive responses to the activities of Catholic religious orders, and a situation generating one could quickly come to provoke another. Moreover, perhaps particularly among some of the more zealous confreres with whom Shrigley was staffed, commitment to the College's core objectives co-existed all too easily with a conviction that the outside world was a dangerous place, something to be wary of rather than to which to relate. The evidence does not suggest that any explicit strategy was adopted in the midst of this ambivalence and uncertainty, but it does reveal elements of the process whereby Shrigley gradually won support from the variety of individuals and groups who came to know the place well. The fact that its splendid House occupied a magnificent setting was of huge benefit, especially once Tilden's fine church was added to it. To external eyes what went on there was unusual, but the place itself was singularly impressive. Moreover, in the early years the College was certainly more open to interaction with those beyond the boundaries of the estate than it was to be in later decades, and Fr. Ciantar undoubtedly played a pivotal role at the tiller of Shrigley's external relations.

For example, under Ciantar's Vice-Rectorship, Fr. Kelly, the parish priest of Bollington, was a very early visitor – on 14 November 1929 – as special Confessor, a role he was to play on very many occasions in the future.[63] Less than a month later, on 8 December, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the boys' choir sang Solemn High Mass in the Catholic Church in Bollington. As one of the choristers later recalled, 'We had all kinds of ideas about the reception and the party as we walked down to the Church ... We sang our young hearts out and afterwards walked back to Shrigley, disillusioned.'[64] Their presence had merely

[61] *Macclesfield and East Cheshire Observer*, 24 Jan. 1930 (SDB.GB.SH/III/10).

[62] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 22 Nov. 1929, 17 Dec. 1929, 25 Jan. 1930, 7 Oct. 1930.

[63] *Ibid.*, 14 Nov. 1929.

[64] SDB.GB.SH/III/65, '1929-79', Shrigley's 50th Anniversary Booklet, 31 Jan. 1979 – the quotation is from the contribution by Fr. J. Delahunty SDB, 'An Old Boy's Memories'.

evoked curiosity rather than the anticipated fuss and reward. Reciprocally, in the evening a group of visitors from the parish, 'including women', attended a Sacred Academy (a religious concert) at Shrigley.[65] If practical engagement with the adjacent Catholic community was obviously sensible, active collaboration with the local Catholic clergy was a prime means of achieving this objective. And so, despite being relatively few in number and notwithstanding their College duties, the priests at Shrigley made themselves available to provide cover – 'supply' as it has always been called – for neighbouring secular clergy. Significantly, in July 1930 when there was a mix-up over arrangements for supply which made some local clergy 'very annoyed', Ciantar was immediately consulted as Superior. Absent from the College foraging for aspirants, he sent a telegram advising instant 'compliance' with the needs of the seculars.[66]

Inevitably, needs were mutual and worked both ways. From an early stage 'about a dozen women [had] been charitably coming to scrub out the house'. Soon after his arrival as Rector, Fr. Franco 'entertained them to tea'.[67] On occasion circumstances drew the College into close practical contact with neighbours. Bread was normally delivered daily by van but in one particularly bad winter the vehicle could not get up the steep drive because of the depth of the snow. 'The boys have to go down almost to Bollington to carry up the bread'.[68] At a remarkably early stage it was realised that utilisation of new media was likely to win new friends and influence people in the right direction and, despite the infancy of the requisite technology, a film on 'Life at Shrigley' was available from March 1933.[69] The information which it provided was valuable but the novelty of its mode of delivery made it even more attractive.

Another development evident in these early years was the cultivation of close relations with individuals who had strong local influence. Chief among these, undoubtedly, was Mr. Edward Lomas, a leading local businessman in the Macclesfield silk-throwing industry and someone who was involved in extensive public service in the area. He was also a prominent Catholic layman whose benevolence to the Church was rewarded by papal appointment as a Knight of the Order of St. Gregory, and later as a Knight Commander.[70] The Lomas family had a long association with Shrigley but there were many other lay supporters, or 'co-operators' as the Salesians called them. As this first decade progressed they appeared at Shrigley in growing numbers. It was most often Ciantar who was their first link with the Salesians.

[65] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 8 Dec. 1929.
[66] *Ibid.*, 10-11 July 1930.
[67] *Ibid.*, 13 Oct. 1930.
[68] *Ibid.*, 25 Feb. 1933.
[69] *Ibid.*, 3 March 1933.
[70] Local Newspaper Obituary – 'Mr E. Lomas K.C.S.G., J.P.: Leading Business Man and Generous Benefactor', interleaved in SDB.GB.SH/I/7, House Chronicle, 1950-58, n.d. but c. 1952.

Nonetheless, one of the earlier and more unusual connections came via Franco. Shortly after the Salesians arrived at Shrigley a Dr. W. D. and Mrs. Annie Pennington came to live in the area, at Snape House, Adlington. Born in 1868 as W. D. Standfast, Dr. Pennington had been ordained in the Church of England in 1899 and married his wife in 1924, assuming her maiden name. He 'was for some time Lecturer to the Oxford Diocesan Church History Society' and in some manner had been 'attached to Jesus College, Oxford'. In the same year as his marriage he had received orders from Archbishop Williams, the self-styled Metropolitan of the so-called Old Roman Catholic Church in England. However, by the time the Penningtons retired to Snape House they were both anxious to become conventional Catholics and in late 1931, shortly after Franco's arrival as Rector, they asked him to receive them formally into the Church. Because their home was closer to Shrigley than to Bollington Franco allowed them to attend Mass at the College each Sunday. He also gave them instruction in the faith for over a year. As he candidly admitted, 'their case is not so simple and just because of its complications I have been putting them off for some considerable time'. Eventually, in January 1933 he wrote to Ambrose Moriarty, the Coadjutor Bishop of Shrewsbury, seeking permission to proceed further. Following submission to the Bishop by Dr. Pennington of 'an undertaking in writing that he would not make any use of whatever orders' he had previously been vested with, this was duly granted and the couple were received into the Church at Shrigley on 15 April that year.[71] The death of Andrew Gallagher, the first of four boys to die during this decade, occurred less than a week later and it was through Dr. Pennington's influence with the local authorities that the Salesians were allowed to establish their own cemetery in the College grounds, not far from the site proposed for Tilden's church. In June Pennington accompanied Fr. Tozzi to the ceremony of the laying of the foundation stone of the new Catholic Cathedral in Liverpool. Later the Penningtons donated 'a new set of black vestments' to the College which were used for the first time on the Feast of All Souls in November 1933. In February 1935, long before serious work on Tilden's Church got under way, a 'model' of it was 'placed on view in the parlour'. Although perhaps he merely paid for it, this (according to the Chronicle) was 'constructed by Dr. Pennington'.[72] And it was Pennington's wife, Annie, an equally strong supporter of the College, who bought the 'Memorial Book' later used in the Church and Shrine.[73] Many other such relationships were generated

[71] These details are drawn from the following documents held in the Shrewsbury Diocesan Archives held at St. Joseph's Primary School in Birkenhead: Franco to Bishop Moriarty, 13 Jan. 1933 (wrongly dated 1932 on the original); Bishop Moriarty to Franco, 16 Jan. 1933; Pennington to Bishop Moriarty, 13 April 1933. See also SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 15 April 1933.

[72] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 20 & 22 April, 5 June & 2 Nov. 1933; 24 Feb. 1935.

[73] SDB.GB.SH/I/2, Don Bosco Memorial Book, endorsed 'Presented by Annie Pennington, Salesian Cooperator, 9 March 1934'.

further afield – in Stockport, Manchester, Glasgow, Dublin, Belfast and elsewhere. Through them Shrigley steadily accumulated the support which brought it fresh recruits. In times of great hardship for everyone this generated indispensable recurrent income, the extent of which was evident on the summer's day in 1938 when the Church and Shrine of St. John Bosco were opened. Yet, while co-operators were essential to the tasks of generating recurrent income and defraying the heavy development costs of these foundation years, there was an even more fundamental need: to recruit aspirants, boys who were prepared to test their sense of vocation by enrolling at the College. In this work Ciantar was brilliantly successful. As Shrigley's roving recruiting officer he cut swathes of influence through the Catholic communities of Ireland, Scotland and northern England. He had great entrepreneurial skill and flair, and quickly developed networks which led both to the healthy enrolment characteristic of this decade and to the steady growth of income from benefactors and co-operators.

Chapter Six

PUBLICITY AND RECRUITMENT

Precisely when Ciantar began marketing the College's wares is uncertain, though it could scarcely have been before late January 1929 when Tozzi struck the outline deal on Shrigley. Nevertheless, between then and midsummer over 50 boys were recruited, and Ciantar sailed from Liverpool on 9 September to round up the Irish contingent, returning with them ten days later.[74] This level of pastoral care of his young charges was typical of him and there are several examples of his crossing the Irish sea, in both directions, shepherding even one or two boys to and from the College.[75]

Being Vice-Rector and, therefore, primarily responsible for the entire venture in its first year, Ciantar's efforts were particularly tightly stretched. From the start, however, he clearly regarded it as imperative to secure goodwill close to his base before venturing further afield. Less than two weeks after the Salesians arrived at Shrigley, Fr. Kelly, parish priest of Bollington, had lent them a tabernacle for the chapel.[76] Ciantar 'supplied', or covered, for Fr. Kelly at Bollington on 8 September and, almost inevitably in view of his subsequent track record, 'after evening service there was an enquiry by one [girl] to join' the Salesian Sisters.[77] Within a month Ciantar attended a conference where he was able to meet the priests of the diocese of Shrewsbury.[78] And just over a month later, on 10 November 1929, Bishop Singleton came to Shrigley to conduct a confirmation.[79] Later in this first academic year, once the better weather arrived, there were no fewer than eight visits to Shrigley by groups from the diocese and other adjacent areas, who had obviously been encouraged to regard the College as a prime location for liturgical celebrations and other similar occasions.[80] Such encouragement continued throughout the decade, fostered primarily by Ciantar.

In charge, as he was, of a small all-male staff, Ciantar was also keenly aware that at this stage the needs of the College cried out for some female skills. For several years a group of local ladies banded together on a voluntary basis to perform cleaning and mending duties;[81] and in the very earliest stages one

[74] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 9 & 19 Sept. 1929.

[75] For example, *ibid.*, 11 March 1931 & 8 March 1933.

[76] *Ibid.*, 11 March 1931 & 8 March 1933.

[77] *Ibid.*, 8 Sept. 1929.

[78] *Ibid.*, 1 Oct. 1929.

[79] *Ibid.*, 10 Nov. 1929.

[80] *Ibid.*, 25 May; 7, 12 & 19 June; 27 July; 24 & 31 Aug; & 15 Sept. 1930.

[81] For a photograph of the fourteen women who made up 'Don Bosco's Sewing Guild', see the article on 'The Missionary College' in *S.B.*, Vol. XXIV, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1932), pp. 165-167.

woman, Nurse Louie Townshend, did much more than this. She clearly knew Ciantar well, possibly from his days at Cowley. A single woman, apparently of some independent means, she purchased a baby Austin car for Ciantar to facilitate his frequent peregrinations; and, known to the staff and boys as Mamma Margaret (after Don Bosco's mother), she stayed in a cottage at Shrigley from time to time on visits from her home in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, working as a seamstress, baker and perhaps also as a nurse. Beyond the first year her visits became less frequent but survivors from those early days remember her well.[82]

Meanwhile, from the earliest stages too, Ciantar also operated much further afield. Having seen the College safely through its first term, he spent the entire month of January 1930 in Ireland, and as early as 11 January there was 'exhilarating news of Fr. Ciantar's success in Belfast'.[83] Later in the year, on 7 July, he left for a two-week visit to 'Glasgow, via Durham, Newcastle and Edinburgh'.[84] At this stage as well as being head of the House he was also engaged in teaching and was clearly too busy to direct his main attention to recruitment, vital though it was. This all changed with the arrival of Fr. Franco as Rector and Fr. Payne as Prefect of Studies (Headmaster) in 1930, when duties were rearranged in such a way as to leave Ciantar much freer to travel.[85] Annually thereafter he usually made two major visits to Ireland, at least one to Scotland, with more frequent but briefer forays to various parts of England, particularly in the north.

From the start Ciantar took great care to ensure that even the smallest monetary contributions were encouraged, and an all-inclusive, graded hierarchy was established for this purpose.

> Become a Founder of a Burse (£100) which will enable us to take a boy at once. Become a Benefactor (£30) by paying a student's course for a year. Become a Promoter by taking a Missionary Box, or subscribing £1 yearly or interesting friends in our work. Join the League of Shrigley Friends by an annual offering of one shilling towards the Saving of Vocations Fund.[86]

[82] Here I am reliant partly on the personal testimony of Fr. A. Carette SDB. Also, however, in the albums of photographs dating from the 1930s at SDB.GB.SH/V/3 & 4 are a number which were turned into postcards and some of which were sent to Nurse Townshend, either at Shrigley or in Lincolnshire, by Ciantar, telling of his travels and, e.g., rejoicing in the car. See also for visits to Shrigley by Nurse Townshend SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 19 March & 20 Dec. 1930; 29 July 1933; 25 Sept. 1936; 10 Feb. 1937; SH/I/4, House Chronicle, 24 Oct. 1938.

[83] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 31 Dec. 1929, 11 Jan. & 2 Feb. 1930.

[84] *Ibid.*, 7 July 1930.

[85] SDB.GB. Mortuary letter for Fr. Thomas Payne; SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 10 Nov. 1930 gives details of the re-arrangements. Payne was 28 years old and newly-ordinated, having completed his theological studies at the Crocetta in Turin. He stayed at Shrigley until 1937 when he became Rector at Chertsey.

[86] *S.B.*, Vol. XXIII, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1931), advertisement on the back.

Another scheme, for the establishment of Apostolic Circles, apparently first developed as a means of generating funds for the building of the chapel/dormitory extension in 1931, proved particularly popular and effective. Each circle comprised twelve people (hence the title), who together collected £120 over four years, i.e. £30 a year, £2. 10s. 0d. individually or, therefore, about one shilling per week.[87] Of necessity the search for money had to be as relentless as that for vocations; and every contributor, however modest their offering, 'could rely on a personal note of thanks' from Ciantar.[88]

During his visits to Ireland Ciantar seems to have enjoyed particular success in Dublin, whose Lord Mayor was expected to return with him for a visit to Shrigley in December 1931 but was prevented from doing so at the last minute.[89] Early in the following year:

> special gratitude is due to the Lord Mayor of Dublin, who invited Fr. Ciantar to lecture in the Mansion House, at which meeting he presided and spoke enthusiastically of the Salesian work. The Mayor of Cork was also specially kind ... in spite of the bad times people of every walk of life have shown their desire to be able to help the work.[90]

These early public performances were illustrated 'lantern lectures' but by 1933 Ciantar was armed with two films, 'The Glory of Don Bosco', and the aforementioned 'Life at Shrigley' which gave an 'inside view [of] how much need there is for co-operation and help'.[91] This time over 2,000 people attended the Theatre Royal, Dublin while a further 1,600 were at matinees. Once again, 'the Lord Mayor honoured the occasion and spoke words of real encouragement'. Ciantar repeated the performance at the Coliseum in Cork, at the Theatre Royal in Tralee, and at 'Mr. Hurst's Picture Palace' in Youghal.[92] Shrigley was possibly better known over a wider area in the 1930s than it was ever to be later. Remarkably, the Lord Mayor of Dublin attended the opening of Tilden's Church in July 1938.

A notable feature of Ciantar's approach was to organise group activity by the boys during the summer vacation which was the only period of the year when they were away from the College. He recognised instinctively that, once they had joined Shrigley, the boys themselves were his best co-recruiters. He began politeness classes for the first cohort in May 1930[93] and in the following July, just before they left for home, he preached to them on 'how to spend the holidays well.'[94]

[87] *S.B.*, Vol. XXIII, no. 4 (July-Aug. 1931), pp. 103-104.
[88] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Fr. Joseph Ciantar.
[89] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 14 Dec. 1931.
[90] *S.B.*, Vol. XXIV, no. 2 (March-April 1932), p. 47.
[91] *S.B.* Vol. XXV, no. 2 (March-April 1933), p. 45.
[92] *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.
[93] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 15 May 1930.
[94] *Ibid.*, 24 July 1930.

What was then possible is well illustrated by events in and around Belfast in Northern Ireland in the summer of 1932. A substantial group of 'zealous co-operators' was already established there: on 1 April, for example, they had organised a 'Grand Concert in St. Paul's Parish Hall' in the city.[95] A further event took place there on Sunday 27 August 1932. The first half of the evening was presided over by 'Mr. Jimmy O'Dea, Ireland's leading comedian, together with his company'. During the second half Shrigley boys from Belfast presented a play, 'The Yellow Shadow', written by one of the College staff. This was a 'great success' with tickets being in such heavy demand that many people could not be accommodated on the Sunday, so the play was repeated on Monday evening.[96] During that same summer Ciantar also organised a 'Camp Don Bosco in Co. Down' where the boys enrolled 'Friends of Shrigley at a shilling a year'. Suitably impressed, 'some Belfast mill girls ... started an Apostolic Circle'.[97] It was at the end of this summer that Shrigley enrolled what was perhaps its largest single annual complement of boys – 170, with some 110 from Ireland and 60 from England and Scotland.[98]

A College Address Book which was filled in punctiliously for each member of the first three cohorts records the geographical origins of the recruits of those years, which are summarised in Table 1.[99] This confirms that in these early years Ireland, north and south, was the prime source of recruits, though by 1931 English admissions were on a strong upward trend.

Table 1: Origins of Recruits to Shrigley, 1929-31

	Ireland		England	Scotland	Other
	N.I.	South			
1929	24	20	10		
1930	16	14	20	4	1
1931	12	35	30	4	1
Total	52	69	60	8	2

Perhaps the most surprising feature of the Table is the slow start made in Scotland, which eventually came to supply Shrigley with a steady stream of vocations. Ultimately, of course, the outbreak of the Second World War led to the severe restriction of traffic with Ireland. Recruitment from there was rapidly cur-

[95] *S.B.*, Vol. XXIV, no. 3 (May-June 1932), p. 76.
[96] *S.B.*, Vol. XXIV, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1932), pp. 165-166.
[97] *Ibid.*, p. 167.
[98] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 2 Sept. 1932.
[99] SDB.GB.SH/I/1, 'Boys' Address Book', 1929-50.

tailed and, following the opening of a Salesian novitiate in Ireland,[100] never recovered. Long before then, however, the more difficult markets in Britain were being worked assiduously by Ciantar. The first boy to join Shrigley from Wales arrived on 31 August 1933[101] and from the following July Ciantar's annual northern tour took in Yorkshire as well as Durham, Northumberland and Scotland.[102] Many recruits were more local in origin and were generated as much by the groups which Ciantar invited to Shrigley as by his external visits. And in addition to boys and money, he regularly garnered benefits in kind. In March 1930 a Dublin lady donated a pair of dalmatics (the outer vestments worn by the Deacon and Sub-Deacon at High Mass),[103] while in May a group of co-operators arrived with some cricket equipment.[104] The costumes used in the Nativity Play at Christmas 1931 were made by a Miss Berry;[105] a statue of St. Joseph arrived in April 1932;[106] and in September 1936, following a lecture to the Knights of St. Columba in Leigh, Lancashire, Ciantar returned to Shrigley 'with a lawnmower and a croquet set'.[107] The most striking example of all, perhaps, came much earlier on 1 June 1930 when Ciantar was in charge as Vice-Rector. There then arrived at Shrigley a Mr. Leo Ashe, once a Salesian novice at Cowley, where no doubt he had first become acquainted with Ciantar. Now a retailer, he offered 'trade terms for beds and bedding'.[108]

[100] The Irish novitiate was established in Ballinakill by Fr. F. Couche SDB, Tozzi's successor as Provincial of the Anglo-Irish Province (SDB.GB.PROV/VIS/I, pp. 82-86, 5-8 Jan. 1942).

[101] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 31 Aug. 1933.

[102] *Ibid.,* 26 July 1934.

[103] *Ibid.*, 17 March 1930.

[104] *Ibid.*, 31 May 1930.

[105] *Ibid.*, 26 Dec. 1931.

[106] *Ibid.*, 6 April 1932.

[107] *Ibid.*, 22 Sept. 1936.

[108] *Ibid.*, 1 June 1930.

Chapter Seven
CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS LIFE

While Ciantar relentlessly searched for vocations, benefactors and 'co-operators', Fr. Angelo Franco had the task, closely informed by Salesian tradition, of establishing a timetable for the life of the College. As annual cohorts built up, it took two to three years to arrive at a settled system which suited Shrigley's needs but, once instituted, this relentlessly steady regime pertained for some three decades.

At 7.00 a.m. the junior dormitory was wakened by loud hand-clapping from the clerical brother-in-charge. There was half an hour to wash and dress. Mass followed at 7.30 with breakfast at 8.00. From 8.20 most boys went off to do various cleaning jobs (euphemistically known as 'hobbies') around the house, a few had piano practice, and there was choir practice for the junior boys. Any spare time before 8.55 was spent playing in the quadrangle formed naturally by the configuration of the central buildings. Then everyone engaged in one of several shoe-cleaning sessions held throughout the day, which were essential because the boys played so much football in their recreation periods that their shoes were under constant duress. At 9.00 they gathered in double lines by form and departed, youngest first, for lessons which continued till 12.30. 'Dinner' lasted until just after 1.00 p.m. and was followed by further cleaning rotas; and then by some form of organised exercise till 2.00; in reasonable weather normally football or cricket on the playing fields; if raining, a walk beyond the estate or a ramble in the grounds. Afternoon classes lasted until 4.30 and were followed by tea, and then by either further jobs or instrument practice till the short service of Benediction at 5.30. From 5.50 till 7.50 there was communal study in form rooms before supper at 8.00. The final jobs of the day were discharged till 8.30 before further recreation in the quadrangle until Night Prayers in the chapel at 9.00. 'Lights out' and sleep came at about 9.30 p.m.[109]

There were variations in this basic pattern. Senior boys, who occupied a separate dormitory, rose at 6.00 a.m. throughout the year and did one hour's communal study before Mass. Wednesdays and Saturdays had a somewhat different shape to other days, with lessons in the morning but not in the afternoon; a rather longer period of sport after lunch; and an extended period of cleaning before tea. On Sundays there were no classes, but a second, High Mass at 9.30; an entire afternoon of competitive sport between the four Houses of the College; after tea a full choir practice; and two correspondingly shorter periods of communal study before lunch and supper respectively. On Feastdays and major public holidays

[109] MURRAY, '*Personal Memoir*', pp. 1-4, together with the personal memories of the author.

the regime was more relaxed and a timetable similar to Sundays normally applied. Evening recreation was often extended during the longer days of summer. However, for most of the year there were few variations in the standard timetable, which held the entire community in a very firm grip. All junctures in this timetable were signalled by a bell: minor ones like changes in class by a cacophonous electric one; major ones such as the times of church services by a more sonorous, hand-pulled instrument. Everyone was required to obey these regular calls immediately.

With so many special projects under way in the 1930s, at least until Tilden's church was opened in July 1938, this programme was adjusted from time to time, sometimes substantially. Normally, however, it remained intact. If not exactly regimented, it was certainly a very ordered life, with each segment of every day being devoted to a clearly dedicated purpose. Lives were not just closely timetabled, they were busy: the emphasis was on activity; there was very little time for reflection. It was a narrowly confined existence in other ways too. There were no holidays at home at Christmas or Easter. In the 1930s the only time when Shrigley was empty of boys was during the month of August when they returned as comparative strangers to their families. And of course it was only during this short period at home that women or girls played any part in their lives.

To accord separate treatment to 'Church and Religious Life' is in one crucial sense to distort the reality of Shrigley: the religious dimension permeated the whole of everyday life. The community had already dedicated themselves to the Salesian ideal: whether as priests; clerical brothers engaged in practical experience as teachers or pursuing their theological training prior to ordination; or as lay brothers engaged in the manual work which underpinned the College's existence. There was also a fundamental seriousness to what the boys were about: coming as they did from fervently loyal Catholic families, they believed that they might have a vocation to the priesthood or to the lay brotherhood; and that they had a precious opportunity, and a duty, to pursue this possibility seriously.

Beyond formal services and other set pieces there was constant reference to the spiritual significance of everything the community and boys did. Thus, as they were wakened in the morning by the hand-clapping of the Brother-in-charge of their dormitory, the latter proclaimed '*Benedicamus Domino*' to which the boys responded '*Deo Gratias*', an exchange which, encapsulating the entire day, was repeated immediately before 'lights out'. Blocks of classes in both morning and afternoon, and personal study in the evening, began and ended with prayers. Statues were located at strategic points in the chapel, house and grounds; and the walls of virtually every major room in the establishment were hung with crucifixes, religious pictures or invocations such as '*Ad Majorem dei Gloriam*'. The overriding purpose of everyone's presence at Shrigley, in fact of their very existence, was proclaimed persistently and pervasively.

The chapel, however, was the spiritual and religious heart of the institution. In the early days this was located in the large room to the east end of the front of the house. This became the community's refectory once the chapel was re-located to the more spacious ground floor of the Martyrs' Wing in 1931. This too became a refectory, for the boys, when Tilden's church was completed. Prior to this the boys had taken their meals in the front Hall, immediately inside the main doors of the College. One reason for building the new church, as we know, was to create a national shrine to Don Bosco. Another was to provide the College with a fitting environment for the services which occupied the central place in its life. The physical manifestations of Shrigley's primary objective, to train boys for the priesthood and religious life, were complemented by the collective force of an entire community perpetually at prayer.

Each morning before breakfast the boys attended Low Mass which was said (in Latin of course in those days) at the main altar of the chapel. Other masses, meanwhile, proceeded at side altars. Each priest wore vestments of the colour appropriate to the respective liturgical season – Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and so on, a kaleidoscope which was further elaborated on the substantial number of Feast or Saints' days which were observed. Rotas ensured that each pupil had regular opportunities for formal participation in services as vested altar boys. When not acting in this capacity they occupied pews reserved for their form groups. Attendance at all services was compulsory and boys were expected to behave impeccably in chapel which, invariably, they did. On Sundays and major Holy Days and Feastdays a second, High Mass took place a little later in the morning, once everyone had breakfasted, completed jobs or attended choir practice, and had some recreation. High Masses were elaborate ceremonies involving, centrally, three priests, two of whom supported the chief celebrant as deacon and sub-deacon respectively. Normally, a fourth priest delivered a sermon, and one of the brothers or a senior boy acted as M.C., presiding over a platoon of altar boys including several acolytes and a thurifer, and delivering his instructions in Latin. The proceedings were enhanced by carefully rehearsed choral music provided by a mixed group of clerics and boys.

Every day in the late afternoon there was the short, sung service of Benediction, which was preceded on Sundays and many Feastdays by the Church's formal evening prayer, also sung, of Vespers or Compline, according to the liturgical season. And then, at the end of every day, again in chapel, there were night prayers followed by the special Salesian tradition of the 'Good Night' – a final message of the day normally delivered by the Rector, but delegated from time to time to another priest, who might be a member of the community or a visitor. For example, on 5 November 1930, Fr Murray, the Prefect and therefore responsible for the College accounts, gave a 'splendid' talk after night prayers. That week the boys had been heavily involved in work in the cornfields and that day had been

engaged in lifting potatoes. Fr Murray's exhortation centred on the theme that 'we are poor'. Twenty-four hours later it was recorded that 'the boys really ... [did] ... work today'.[110]

There were many other services in addition to the daily or weekly routine. The major festivals of Christmas and Easter were celebrated with fitting solemnity. The former involved a Midnight Mass before which the boys went to bed early and rose later for the service, which was followed by a seasonal repast before they retired again. The latter involved the full panoply of a sung liturgy over the three days of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, and on Easter Day itself Low Mass was followed after breakfast by a solemn, sung High Mass. There were many other Holy Days. The autumn term during the build-up to Christmas saw the Feasts of St. Cecilia and of St. Andrew in November, and of the Immaculate Conception in early December. Between Christmas and Easter were the Feasts of the Holy Family in January, and of St. Patrick and St. Joseph in March. And beyond Easter, running up to the short summer holiday, were the Feasts of Mary, Help of Christians (to whom the Salesians were specially devoted and who was also the patroness of the Diocese of Shrewsbury) in May; and of Corpus Christi, the Sacred Heart, and Sts. Peter and Paul in June. Added to these were more specifically Salesian occasions: Don Bosco's Feastday (26 April until 1936 and 31 January thereafter);[111] the remembrance day of his most celebrated pupil, Dominic Savio, on 9 March; and Fr. Rector's Day (5 May under Angelo Franco and 29 December for Thomas Hall). Invariably treated in a similar fashion were the occasions when distinguished visitors appeared, for instance Archbishop Guerra in October 1929,[112] Cardinal Hlond a year later,[113] and Archbishop Tanna in June 1932;[114] or other special occasions such as the annual Sodality Congresses,[115] the unveiling of Dominic Savio's statue on 23 June 1933,[116] the cutting of the first sod for Tilden's new church on 1 April 1934 (the day of Don Bosco's canonisation in Rome),[117] the opening of the Sacred Heart Terrace in June 1936,[118] and the consecration of the new church two years later.[119] These were but the highlights: other such occasions are too numerous to mention. At the beginning of the farm year in

[110] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 6 Nov. 1930.

[111] *Ibid.*, 26 April 1936 & 31 January 1937.

[112] *Ibid.*, 9-10 Oct. 1929.

[113] *Ibid.*, 15-16 Oct. 1930.

[114] *Ibid.*, 29 June 1932.

[115] Among the substantial number of Minute Books of Sodality Meetings at Shrigley are three volumes from the 1930s (SDB.GB.SH/I/14-16).

[116] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 22-23 June 1933.

[117] *Ibid.*, 1 April 1934.

[118] *Ibid.*, 20-21 June 1936. On the second of these two days the first ordinations were conducted at Shrigley (by Bishop Moriarty of Bros. E. Clift and C. Rushton).

[119] *Ibid.*, 23-25 July 1938. Various ceremonies were conducted across three days. The souvenir programme for the event is at SDB.GB.SH/III/24.

the early spring there were Rogation processions out to the farmland where the young crops were blessed, much to the consternation – the Chronicle records – of horses, cattle and sheep.[120] Each year, towards Easter, there was a three-day Retreat, with a special timetable which included the singing of all the Offices of Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, Compline, Matins and Lauds, and which had built into it long periods of compulsory silence.[121] And each month there took place the specifically Salesian Exercise for a Happy Death, a day-and-a-half of readying oneself for the inevitability of death, when individual places in form rooms were routinely changed, when a Special Confessor came from outside the College (often in the 1930s Fr. Kelly, parish priest of St. Gregory's in Bollington), and when, metaphorically, slates were wiped clean.[122]

While in a purely physical sense all these special occasions provided a break in the standard routine, they also served in a different sense to emphasise and enhance that routine. Every aspect of life at Shrigley was subordinate to the spiritual. This gave inexorable momentum to a latent desire to conduct religious services in the most splendid environment which the College could afford. In a venture which in its entirety was a fresh departure there were, of course, other facets to the decision to commission a new church from Philip Tilden. Beyond the early 1930s the size of the total community at Shrigley was such that, even after the move to the ground floor of the Martyrs' Wing, the chapel was too small for basic requirements.[123] Following Ciantar's success in generating popular interest in the College, with the result that increasingly large groups wished to visit it, it was clearly seen to be physically inadequate: on many occasions before the opening of the new church in 1938 services for visiting groups had to be held *al fresco*, a risky arrangement in Shrigley's climate.[124] There was also the desire, particularly evident at senior level right through to Turin, to create a national shrine to Don Bosco in Britain. At base, however, the College's commitment to elaborate liturgical activity of the highest quality also created a demand for a splendid church. This was the fundamental domestic dynamic behind the Tilden commission.

[120] *Ibid.*, 27-28 May 1930.
[121] See e.g. SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 14-18 April 1931.
[122] See for example *ibid.*, 3 June 1931, 31 May 1932, 1 Feb. 1933.
[123] KILDUFF, *Shrigley 1929-2004*, p. 25.
[124] *Ibid.*, p. 109.

Chapter Eight
THE SCHOOL

Shrigley was also a school. In the view of contemporaries it was axiomatic that those aspiring to the priesthood should attain a high standard of education. The demands made of lay brothers were much less stringent, but those interested in this way of life were always in a small minority.

Remarkably few details have survived of the academic curriculum followed by the boys. Unsurprisingly, there was strong emphasis on Latin, and on English and Religious Studies (or Catechism as it was more accurately described). There was 'no Greek: for classical scholars this was a serious omission and a great handicap. Latin by itself was one wing. To fly, one needs two wings'. Moreover, 'there was no science of any kind'. Yet for a time at least the boys were taught Italian, *de facto* the official language of the Salesians. 'In general', according to one contemporary:

> the education at Shrigley was solid and basic. It would have delighted the hearts of modern British educational theorists as well as today's M.P.s. Considering that all the students had come from secondary schools and were of at least average ability, our teachers had no great problems either with lack of intelligence or bad behaviour in the classroom.[125]

Nonetheless, while the names of the forms – Lower Elements, Upper Elements, Grammar, Syntax, and Lower and Upper Rhetoric – were on permanent loan from the English public school system, Shrigley found it difficult to operate at the level of a grammar school, being at the mercy of staffing changes and shortages among the Salesians in the Anglo-Irish province. So close in age to the senior boys they were teaching, clerical brothers came and went, on their three to four years of practical training between their philosophical studies and the theological studies which preceded their ordination as priests. There were, therefore, serious problems of continuity. Moreover, during this period and for some time afterwards there were simply not enough brothers and priests adequately qualified as teachers to staff the number of schools then run by the Salesians in Britain: remarkably few of them had any formal qualifications at all.[126]

[125] MURRAY, '*Personal Memoir*', p. 2.

[126] Some frank retrospective comments on these issues can be found in SDB.GB.PROV/CHAP/II/12, 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Provincial Chapter, Battersea', 24-25 April 1952, p.5 and PROV/NL/I/1 *News-Letter of the Anglo-Irish Province*, Vol. I, no. 1 (July 1958), p. 2.

This was not the only resource bottleneck: books were another. Via the *Salesian Bulletin*, which appeared several times a year, Fr. Franco launched an appeal for books 'to start a library for the staff and students at Shrigley ... in Latin, English, French or Italian, treating of Theology, Philosophy, Apologetics, Science, History, Biography or Fiction'. This evoked some response but only slowly, so that 'reading material, apart from textbooks, was not available to us. Even sixty years later I still prefer textbooks and manuals to any other reading'.[127]

No doubt these deficiencies were mirrored in other schools, certainly in those catering, as Shrigley did, for the sons of the working class. But there were significant compensating features: a timetable which generally allowed adequate time for private study with no distractions; an excellent, caring relationship between the majority of the teachers and their pupils; and the spur of an individual and collective higher endeavour. More prosaically, there was an active Debating Society. The question put in June 1931 was 'which school gives the better education; the secondary day school or the boarding school?'[128] Though perhaps predictable, the outcome of this debate is unrecorded, whereas in February 1932 England's greatest poet found little support following a debate on whether more Shakespeare should be taught in schools.[129] In May 1932 there was a 'Prize Debate' on the question of the possible conversion of England, though with what outcome is unknown.[130] By 1935 there were both Senior and Junior Debating Societies.[131] A question which one of them, probably the older group, addressed in March of the following year was: 'Has the League of Nations justified its existence?'[132] Later, in October, the seniors decided by 42 votes to 18 that indigenous clergy were not absolutely necessary for the future of the missions.[133] At Shrigley, as elsewhere, turkeys were disinclined to vote for Christmas!

In spite of the difficulties which he faced Franco did not flinch from maintaining what he judged to be appropriate academic standards on the basis of available facilities and it was not uncommon for boys to be required to leave, 'being unsuccessful in their studies'.[134] Marks were read out publicly on a monthly basis and everyone's progress was periodically measured via formal examinations at Christmas, Easter and in July.[135] Where Franco's regime might be ques-

[127] *S.B.,* Vol. XXIV, no. 5 (Sept.-Oct. 1932), p. 154; Murray, 'Personal Memoir', p. 2. A Shrewsbury diocesan priest, Canon Marrs, bequeathed books to Shrigley in 1935 and Bro. F. Gaffney did 'two years of valuable work in the College Library' between 1934 and 1936 while pursuing his theological studies (SDB.GB.SH/ I/3, House Chronicle, 7 Oct. 1935 & 30 July 1936).

[128] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 7 June 1931.

[129] *Ibid.*, 7 Feb. 1932.

[130] *Ibid.*, 23 May 1932.

[131] *Ibid.*, 9 March & 13 Oct. 1935.

[132] *Ibid.*, 14-15 March 1936.

[133] *Ibid.*, 11 Oct. 1936.

[134] *Ibid.*, 11 March 1931.

[135] See e.g. in the academic year 1930-31 SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 17 Nov. & 15-20 Dec. 1930; 21, 26-31 March, 23 May, 22 June, 13, 20-25 July 1931.

tioned is in regard to the very substantial amount of time devoted to necessary manual work rather than to study; and, perhaps more so, in his personal lack of understanding of how academic activity at Shrigley might best articulate with the rest of the British educational system. There was little in his experience to help him in this matter and, against the background of his own advanced studies, he was always primarily concerned with the quality of the training of the young Salesian theologians who were taught at Shrigley during the period 1932-36. When he left Shrigley in 1936 he proceeded with the theologians to the newly-acquired house at Blaisdon in Gloucestershire as Rector.

Just over two years prior to Franco's departure, as part of the publicity associated with Don Bosco's canonisation, the Salesians produced a brief survey of their activities in the Anglo-Irish province:

> In England the main work has been that of secondary schools which, both by the gaining of government recognition and outstanding examination results, have proved their efficiency and success.

In addition to re-iterating the aspiration 'to commence work there shortly on the creation of a church ... which will be the Province's shrine', the section on Shrigley indicated that it admitted 'youthful aspirants to the Salesian Congregation, both for work in the Province and on the missions ... upon the quality of the material turned out by Shrigley, the future of the Province will largely depend' for 'until lately the Province has depended entirely on vocations from [our] schools'. The course of studies there, therefore, was 'a carefully graded one'.[136] At that stage, however, and for some time there remained considerable scope for the development of the school at Shrigley which, precisely because it had not been accorded high priority in the early years, was neither as well organised nor as successful as Salesian schools elsewhere.

In background and experience Franco's successor, Fr. Thomas Hall, was very different from the rest of his confreres. Born in London in 1902, he came from a well-heeled Anglican background and had been educated at private schools. He became a teacher in 1922, was converted to Catholicism in the following year, and subsequently trained as an engineer. Having been approached by, among others, the Benedictines, he joined the Salesians as a novice at Cowley in 1925 and was ordained in Turin in 1934, visiting Shrigley for the first time immediately afterwards.[137] He then returned to Cowley for two years to pursue degree studies at Oxford University, and was rapidly promoted to Rector of Shrigley, aged thirty-four, from August 1936.[138]

[136] *S.B.*, Vol. XXVI, nos. 4-5 (April-May 1934), 'A Canonisation Tribute to Our Saint', p. 138.
[137] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Fr. Thomas Hall; SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 23 July 1934.
[138] *Ibid.*; SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 27 Aug. 1936.

There was at once a distinct shift of emphasis in the management of the school. In the first place, along with judgements as to who had a vocation and who had not, academic standards were raised and a succession of boys left Shrigley in 1936 and 1937.[139] Secondly, even though Fr. Hall's arrival led to the final, very active phase of the building of Tilden's church, outdoor work was less frequently allowed to interfere with the school timetable. In November 1937, for example, only the senior boys were engaged in potato-picking; previously the entire school had been involved.[140] Thirdly, following a meeting of the English Rectors at Easter 1937, 'separation' rules were systematically applied at Shrigley from the autumn of that year. Involving fairly strict segregation between older and younger boys and, therefore, guarding against the possibility of 'special friendships', such arrangements had long been part of the Salesian tradition, but in the midst of many other pre-occupations had fallen into disuse. They were now re-introduced across the province and while, with so much communal activity involving boys of differing age-groups, they were difficult to enforce at Shrigley, henceforward they became part of the standard regime.[141] Fr. Hall was also responsible for generating a 'supply of modern textbooks'.[142] Most significant of all, he directed the syllabus towards open competition for the Oxford Leaving Certificate. Thereby, whether or not they remained with the Salesians, the work of all the boys was aligned with a nationally recognised qualification.[143] The new Rector was also among the first to insist that young Salesians pursued additional academic work, commonly by correspondence course, alongside their philosophical or theological studies or their practical training.[144] He foresaw the dangers associated with an unqualified teaching force and, albeit distantly, anticipated some of the key features of Rab Butler's ground-breaking Education Act of 1944. If the main thrust of Salesian activity was educational, which it was, Salesians in Britain had to be professionally equipped to pursue their objectives successfully. It took many years for these new approaches to bear fruit, but by the time Fr. Hall became Provincial in 1952, substantial progress had been made.[145]

[139] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 15 Sept. 1936; I/4, House Chronicle, 16-18, 21, 24 Sept., 4 Oct., 15 Nov., 3, 7 Dec. 1937.

[140] SDB.GB.SH/I/4, House Chronicle, 4-6 Nov. 1937.

[141] SDB.GB.PROV/AINS/II/2, 'Deliberations and Resolutions of the Meeting of the Rectors of the Anglo-Irish Province', Battersea, Easter 1937, p.4. The new arrangements were first introduced at Shrigley at the outset of the following school year (SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 15 Sept. 1937).

[142] He worked on this with Fr. Libera, who succeeded Fr. Payne as Prefect of Studies or Headmaster in 1957 (MURRAY, '*Personal Memoir*', p. 2).

[143] *Ibid.*

[144] *Ibid.*

[145] SDB.GB.PROV/NL/I/1, *News-Letter of the Anglo-Irish Province,* Vol. I, no. 1 (July 1958), p. 2.

Beyond broad matters of policy there was another important feature of this change of regime. Franco was a warm personality, 'very friendly and always smiling',[146] who was a genuine father-figure to his cosmopolitan community and not least to the boys. For example, on his Rector's Days he insisted that the Salesians and the boys ate a celebratory dinner together, something which did not occur under any of his successors.[147] At this period of his life, however, Franco did not enjoy particularly good health and was often confined to his room or absent for purposes of rest and recuperation.[148] Moreover, 'he struggled to express himself in English, with his eyes closed and his hand movements'. Whereas Franco celebrated his Silver Jubilee as a priest towards the end of his term as Rector of Shrigley,[149] Thomas Hall (affectionately known as Tammany)[150] was younger, fitter and more socially-skilled with teenagers.

> Although he spoke and came across as an uppercrust Englishman with a faint Oxford accent, he was not afraid of working with his hands ... His presence made an immediate impact on us. Being an articulate English gentleman, with a ready smile and a twinkle in his eye, he spoke and said things that we could not misinterpret. He always gave the impression that he was personally interested in you and knew all about you. He mixed well with us in the recreation periods and on outdoor work. The ship was under a new and strong command.[151]

Certainly, although there was probably a mixture of reasons for this, work on Tilden's church proceeded apace from the time of Hall's arrival as Rector and continued uninterrupted until its completion. In terms of background and interests the two men had a great deal in common - Hall too, for example, 'had a wonderful touch with water colours and a sketch pad'[152] - and a mutual respect and liking lasted for the rest of their lives.

[146] MURRAY, '*Personal Memoir*', p. 2.

[147] See e.g. SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 5 May 1932.

[148] See e.g. *ibid.*, 29 Sept., 3-16 Oct., 5 & 17 Nov. 1932; 12 Jan. & 8 Oct. 1933; 30 March & 1 April 1934; I/4, House Chronicle, 3 & 22 May 1940.

[149] MURRAY, '*Personal Memoir*', p.2; SDB.GB.SH/I/3, 29 June 1936.

[150] Oral testimony from Bro. Donald MacDonald SDB, Provincial House, Stockport.

[151] MURRAY, '*Personal Memoir*', p. 2 and his personal testimony to the author.

[152] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Fr. Thomas Hall.

Chapter Nine

MUSIC, DRAMA AND SPORT

Music, drama and sport featured prominently in all Salesian schools the world over from the development of Don Bosco's system at the Festive Oratory in Turin in the mid-nineteenth century. Shrigley was no exception and, because it was a boarding school for all but the month of August each year, there was ample time for both practice and performance.

More overtly enjoyable than many other features of College life, these activities were pursued in one way or another every day of every week, though the numerous Holy Days and Feastdays formally observed in a junior seminary provided important periodic focal points. On virtually all of these occasions there was first of all on the eve an 'Academy' – a Sacred Concert, featuring music, poetry and other presentations, designed to highlight the significance of what was to be celebrated the following day. The day itself witnessed more than usually elaborate church services, and later on an important sporting occasion – House matches, matches between the community and the boys, or between the latter and a visiting team, for example from the Salesian school at Thornleigh in Bolton. Then in the evening there was a concert, a play, or frequently both. Non-academic activities of this kind, therefore, were routinely in substantial demand. The supply was plentiful.[153]

Almost invariably the staff had themselves been educated in Salesian schools and their level of skill in these pursuits was generally high or at least enthusiastically competent. Choral music in chapel was always of a high order too with priests and brothers already proficient in Gregorian plainchant and a variety of sung masses, motets and other pieces. Before too long the boys' choir matched them and, together, they were outstanding. A College band made its first appearance (at least in the Chronicle) in November 1930 and featured regularly thereafter, initially being directed by an external band master.[154] A similar appointment, of a Mr. Evans, a violinist, eventually produced the first performance by a College orchestra on the Feast of Mary, Help of Christians on 24 May 1936.[155] The Salesian way, however, was to do things themselves if at all possible and Shrigley was fortunate for several years in the 1930s in having James Roffinella,

[153] The Chronicles of the 1930s (SDB.GB.SH/I/3 & 4) are copiously interleaved with copies of the programmes organised for these special occasions. See also SH/II/2, 'Programme: Concert in Honour of St. Joseph', 22 March 1936.

[154] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 19 Nov. 1930, 17 Feb. & 6 May 1931, 22 Nov. 1936; I/4 House Chronicle, 3 Oct. 1937.

[155] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 24 May 1936.

an 'outstanding musician', as a member of its community. An Italian with an excellent command of English, he came to Shrigley for his practical training as a clerical brother, and stayed on to study theology from September 1932. He left a year later to complete his studies in Turin prior to ordination, but returned in September 1936 (just as Fr. Hall became Rector) to take up the senior appointment of Catechist, Choirmaster and the person responsible for music throughout the College. While 'he was very strict and forbidding, not very approachable, and indeed a martinet', he had little need to be. The routine timetable provided for 'choir practice after breakfast and band practice after tea', and in any case 'in those days you just did what you were asked to do – and no sulking or arguing'.[156] Remarkably, in view of the modest size of the school roll, Shrigley quickly came to be associated with musical excellence, much enjoyed by visitors and, despite and perhaps because of the strict limitations on excursions, by groups beyond the confines of the College – parishioners in Bollington and nuns in the convent at Buxton being chief among them.[157] Music was above all, however, enjoyable for those who lived at Shrigley, and the 'Welcome Concert' at the beginning of each school year usually 'did a great deal of good to put the newcomers at their ease'.[158] And it was often musical ability which facilitated some of the more ambitious dramatic productions: for example 'Cox and Box' directed by Roffinella on 8 December 1931 and another operetta of unknown title on 3 January 1938. The Shrigley 'Minstrels' were a smash-hit at the post-Christmas entertainments in 1933-34 and returned triumphantly the following year.[159]

As with Roffinella and music, one person in particular made a valuable contribution to the development of the College tradition in drama. Born in London in 1907, Bro. Andrew Russell had been a pupil at the Salesian School at Battersea. He proceeded to the novitiate in 1925, and then in the following year to Cowley where he completed his philosophical studies and embarked on his practical training. This was completed at Shrigley where he arrived at the start, in the late summer of 1929; and where he stayed on for most of his theological studies until the summer of 1934. Although he was an 'excellent' sportsman, and had founded both a boxing club and a cross-country team at Cowley 'he was especially good in writing plays and sketches, and getting his boys to join in their production with enthusiasm'.[160] It was Brother Andrew's direction of a play about an episode from penal times for Ciantar's Feastday in March 1930 that was voted 'the greatest success of the year'.[161] He wrote, produced and directed 'The Reign of Terror'

[156] *Ibid.*, 8 Dec. 1931; 19 Sept. 1933; 1 Sept. 1936. The quotations are drawn from Murray, 'Personal Memoir', p. 4.

[157] See e.g. SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 29 June 1933 & 29 Dec. 1936.

[158] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 5 Sept. 1936.

[159] *Ibid.*, 8 Dec. 1931, Dec.-Jan. 1933-34, 29 Dec. 1934; I/4, House Chronicle, 3 Jan. 1938.

[160] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Fr. Andrew Russell.

[161] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 19 March 1930.

in October 1931, 'again' proving 'that he is a born playwright'.[162] And it was he who authored 'The Yellow Shadow' which, with an entire cast of Shrigley boys from N. Ireland, played to packed houses at St. Paul's Hall in Belfast in the summer of 1932.[163] Another of his successes was 'Blessed Edmund Campion', a three-act tragedy which he produced with boys from Grammar form for Rector's Day in May 1933.[164] While plays like these were produced at all times of the year, the evenings in the week or so after Christmas each year witnessed a succession of self-made performances which at one point or another featured virtually every boy in the College.[165] Brother Andrew was so exhausted at the end of the Christmas season in 1932-33 that he left 'with his parents for a holiday' on 9 January.[166] Subsequently, it became traditional for each form to be responsible for a single post-Christmas production, which intensified the sense of rivalry and anticipation; and which, at a practical level, distributed the burden of directorial duties more equitably among those clerical brothers who were form-masters.[167]

All this contrasted sharply with the quiet and subdued nature of much of life at Shrigley. There was a general air of restraint in church, study, dormitory and often elsewhere. And yet during this decade for eleven out of twelve months a year the College was also home to 150 or more boys. The answer to the question of when and how safety valves were fully released is overwhelmingly on the sports field.

Coming as both the community and the boys did from the Catholic working class, it is scarcely surprising that soccer was their chief sport. They played soccer with a tennis ball at every short break in the course of the day, priests and brothers playing vigorously in their cassocks, no mean skill, though voluminous black folds gave them a distinct advantage in enabling them to trap the small ball more readily than the boys. Between September and Easter, weather permitting, the boys donned boots and socks, and played a proper game with a full-sized ball on pitches with a referee, every day of the week. The weather had to be very bad indeed to prevent them for doing so. Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays saw brief games at form level; on Wednesdays and Saturdays there were somewhat longer games; and on Sundays 'House' matches in full kit with league tables and cup competitions. With four 'Houses' named after four martyrs (Fisher, More, Ogilvie and Plunkett) playing at three levels (Seniors, Juniors and Bantams), there was plenty of complexity to competitions, huge commitment and not a little skill.

[162] *Ibid.*, 25 Oct. 1931.
[163] *S.B.*, Vol. XXIV, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1932), pp. 165-167.
[164] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 5 May 1933.
[165] See for example, *ibid.*, 26-28 Dec. 1930.
[166] *Ibid.*, 9 Jan. 1933.
[167] See for example, *ibid.*, 26-31 Dec. 1936; SH/I/4, House Chronicle, 27 Dec. 1937 – 3 Jan. 1938.

Inevitably, some boys were unathletic and uninterested: for them the period after lunch must have been the worst time of the day. The rest played incessantly and, despite the virtues inculcated at other times, there was never any pretence that results were unimportant. It took the arrival of a second cohort of boys to generate serious competition but as early as 8 November 1930 even the midweek form matches had 'to be stopped because they ... [were] ... too "lively."'[168] Nor was the rivalry exclusively internal. Earlier in the year, on 29 January, in the first recorded fixture against a visiting side, the boys of the slightly older Salesian school at Thornleigh, near Bolton were 'greatly surprised' to be beaten 9-5 by Shrigley who, 'on a very muddy pitch', also won the return match on 2 April 4-3.[169] The most fiercely contested fixtures were, indeed, internal: matches between the community and the boys, which in the case of the latter were preceded by several practice matches to arrive at the best team.[170] In the early years the average age of the boys was too young for them to offer effective opposition to the staff, and they were defeated particularly heavily – 12-3 – in January 1931.[171] However, the boys posted their first recorded win, by 2-1, in April 1933[172] and thereafter matches were not only fiercely but closely contested.

Throughout the decade there were sufficiently large numbers of boys (and some staff) from Ireland to enable Gaelic games to be played and it is likely that, as the need arose, 'extras' were recruited from among those who hailed from elsewhere. Surprisingly, perhaps, the game chosen for set-piece competitions was not Gaelic football but hurling, with the founding Prefect, Fr. Murray, acting as the chief promoter from among the community. The first recorded game took place on 31 May 1930, though from the following year the sport was routinely pursued in the autumn and winter.[173] Hurling never threatened soccer, and fixtures were relatively infrequent and correspondingly competitive. In November 1931, for instance, the chronicler noted with evident relief, together with a hint of disbelief, that there were 'no casualties' following the first hurling match of the season.[174] Not surprisingly, there were also matches between the community and the boys in this sport, commonly (though not exclusively) on St. Patrick's Day, 17 March, copious quantities of lapel-badge shamrock having arrived from Ireland the day before.[175] Following the boys' resounding victory by 40-28 in 1932, that evening's concert was appreciatively described as 'A Rate Oirish Av'nin'.[176] As members of the community (and of course the boys) came and went, the

[168] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 8 Nov. 1930.
[169] *Ibid.*, 29 Jan. & 2 April 1930.
[170] See for example, *ibid.*, late Nov. – early Dec. 1930 & Dec. 1931.
[171] *Ibid.*, 1 Jan. 1931.
[172] *Ibid.*, 18 April 1933.
[173] *Ibid.*, 31 May 1930.
[174] *Ibid.*, 4 Nov. 1931.
[175] *Ibid.*, 17 March 1930.
[176] *Ibid.*, 17 March 1932.

fortunes of the respective sides ebbed and flowed. Each won once in 1933 and again two years later, but the community won each of the three matches recorded in the three years 1936-38.[177] By prior arrangement there were two matches within four days in 1939, one on St. Patrick's Day and the other on the Feast of St. Joseph: the boys won both.[178] These may have been the last fixtures of their kind because, following the outbreak of war later in the year, the supply of boys from Ireland rapidly diminished.

Beyond Easter, cricket was the standard sporting pastime for the remainder of the College year, subject to House matches, the occasional fixture with a visiting team from Thornleigh or with the community, but never evoking the passion roused by soccer and hurling earlier in the year. Irish boys, and Scots too, were distinctly unexcited by the game, constituting as it did only a peripheral feature of their respective national heritages. Moreover, expenditure on equipment for such a short season (the boys being absent at home for the whole of August) was difficult to justify, although without such it was equally difficult to generate enthusiasm or skill. On one occasion the ever-friendly Bishop of Shrewsbury, Ambrose Moriarty, tried to remedy this deficiency by personally donating six bats.[179] Besides, as the weather grew warmer and the evenings longer between April and July, 'Sports', i.e. various forms of athletics, became popular among some of the boys. Along with the 'Farewell Concert', 'Sports Day' became one of the traditional events which closed the College year in late July.[180]

Apart from the extensive manual work, other physical activities were much more sporadic and intermittent, depending largely on the vagaries of the local climate. Table-tennis was catered for on wet days[181] and on equally hot ones there was swimming in the larger of the two lakes. The latter was a 'daily' diversion in the very warm weather of July 1930 and as early as April 1933 swimming 'teams' were organised for the forthcoming season.[182] Likewise, during the harsh winters of 1932-33 and 1937-38, and occasionally in other years, tobogganing was organised and skaters took with zest to both lakes.[183]

During inclement weather, however, the most common recreation for everyone, boys and community alike, was walking or rambling, sometimes within the estate but more frequently beyond it. To the north of Shrigley lay the quiet lanes and small villages of southern Cheshire – Bollington, Rainow, Adlington, Prestbury and so on. To the south the terrain was more challenging and the scenery more wild and beautiful the further one proceeded onto the moorland of the Derbyshire Peak District. During most of the year walks were short, the time avail-

[177] *Ibid.*, 5 Jan. & 17 March 1933; 17 March & 11 Oct. 1935; 17 March 1936; 17 March 1937; I/4, House Chronicle, 17 March 1938.

[178] SDB.GB.SH/I/4, House Chronicle, 17 & 20 March 1939.

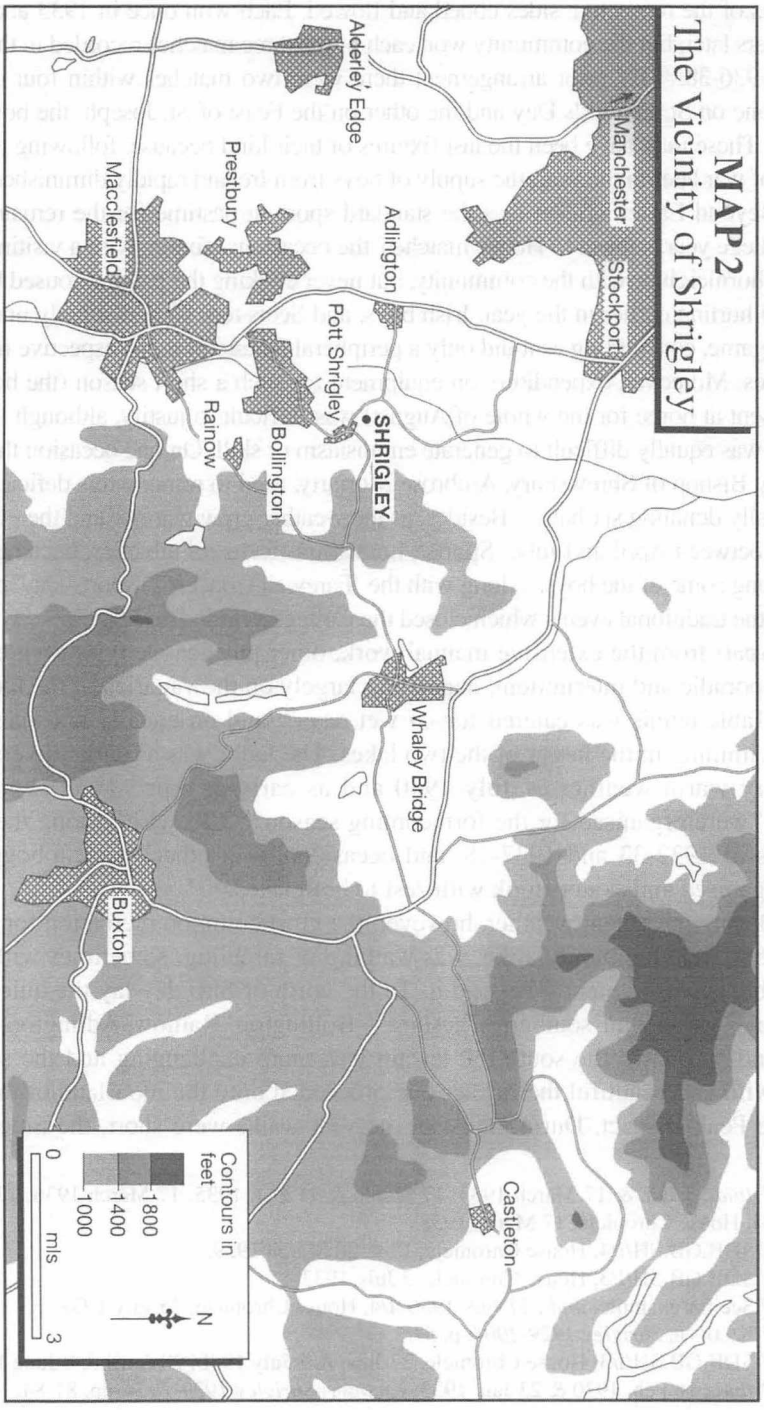
[179] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 3 July 1933.

[180] See for example, *ibid.*, 27 July 1936; I/4, House Chronicle, 25 July 1938.

[181] KILDUFF, *Shrigley 1929-2004*, p. 57.

[182] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 27 June & 3 July 1930; 28 April & 8 June 1933.

[183] *Ibid.*, 16 Feb. 1930 & 23 Jan. 1933; KILDUFF, *Shrigley 1929-2004*, pp. 81-84.


MAP 2
The Vicinity of Shrigley
Manchester
Stockport
Alderley Edge
Adlington
Prestbury
Macclesfield
Pott Shrigley
SHRIGLEY
Bollington
Rainow
Whaley Bridge
Buxton
Castleton
Contours in feet
1800
1400
1000
0
mls
3
N

able not permitting other than a foray of two or three miles. On Holy Days and Feast Days efforts could be more ambitious and locations as distant as Whaley Bridge, Alderley Edge and Castleton (with its caves) were reached.[184]

Each year, also, there was a major, all-day, ten-mile hike to the spa town of Buxton. This was a tough assignment. It involved first of all a sharp left turn at the nearby village of Pott Shrigley, and then a route up past the local brickworks and on to Jenkin Chapel, a bleak and remote Methodist establishment founded in the early eighteenth century. The route continued to the top of the watershed high up on the moors and then descended precipitously through the beautiful Goyt Valley, past a small and intriguing 'Spanish' memorial chapel (dedicated to St. Joseph and where fresh flowers were always to be found), and on down through the grounds of Errwood Hall, the ruined house of a local nineteenth-century industrialist-cum-landowner. The final third crossed the undulating ground which led into Buxton. A clerical brother and some older aspirants first explored the possibility of this excursion on 2 April 1930: they got lost, only arrived in Buxton at 6.30 p.m., found that they had insufficient cash to afford the return journey by public transport, and were obliged to turn round and walk all the way back. They arrived at Shrigley at 12.30 a.m. on the following day, 'very tired and sore'.[185] Nevertheless, the entire College sallied forth on 22 April, breaking their journey for lunch at Goyt Bridge, and arriving in Buxton in time to be given tea at the local convent; and in return to sing Benediction for the nuns and parishioners before returning to Shrigley by bus.[186] What became a long-standing tradition was thus established.

[184] See for example, SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 2 April 1930 & 26 May 1937.

[185] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 2 April 1930.

[186] *Ibid.*, 22 April 1930. For further references to Buxton walks, see I/3, House Chronicle, 7 April 1931; 17 May 1932; 29 June 1933; 29 June 1935.

Chapter Ten

ILLNESS AND DEATH

It would be impossible to infer from the foregoing that Shrigley boys lacked exercise or inhabited an environment which was not conducive to good health, though the constrained finances of the College probably resulted in their diet being somewhat deficient by modern standards. In fact, in comparison with members of their own families, most of whom were likewise poor and many of whom lived in the congested areas of inner cities, it is likely that they were relatively privileged in all three respects. Nonetheless, serious illness and death invaded their ranks on several occasions, testing the College's collective spirit and resolve. Their experience reminds us that, though slowly improving not least as a result of growing government intervention, standards of health in the 1930s remained more akin to those of the late nineteenth than of the early twenty-first century. Indeed, only a decade or so before Shrigley was established, an international influenza epidemic had killed far more people than had perished in hostilities throughout the First World War.[187] Antibiotics in particular had yet to be discovered and, with resistance weakened by the debilitating effects of poor nutrition especially among the working class, infectious diseases periodically claimed victims in a manner which is now rare in the western world. Shrigley's geographical isolation made it perhaps less susceptible to such illnesses, though once they had occurred the size and close physical proximity of its community rendered it peculiarly difficult to control the spread of infection.

Apart from the discovery in November 1929 that one of the boys had a 'slight touch of scabies' and an accident with an axe in the following March which left another with a severe cut to his leg, all went reasonably well for over two years.[188] 'No snow fights were permitted' in February 1931 'on account of the bad coughs prevalent in the house', but fears of the development of something worse proved unfounded.[189] It was not until January 1932 that Shrigley experienced its first 'substantial' outbreak of 'flu: over two dozen individuals were affected, including Fr. Ciantar, and the opening of the new term was briefly dis-

[187] There is general agreement that around 10 million soldiers died during the hostilities and there were of course civilian casualties as well, though not on the scale of the later conflict between 1939 and 1945. The impact of the influenza epidemic of 1918-19 was certainly much greater. Indeed, some commentators believe that it may have killed as many as 40 million people worldwide (J. M. Roberts, *Europe 1880-1945* (London, 1989), pp. 319, 367-370; N. Davis, *A History of Europe* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 776-777). I am grateful to my colleague, Professor A. J. Sharp, for providing me with these references.

[188] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 4 Nov. 1929 & 1 March 1930.

[189] *Ibid.*, 27 Feb. 1931.

rupted, but the strain was a mild one and everything was back to normal within a couple of weeks.[190] In the following January 'flu was 'prevalent in the [surrounding] district' and a paper-chase was organised as a direct response to it, 'the object of the run' being 'to give the boys some exercise and in the open as a preventive [*sic*] to the influenza'.[191] On this occasion, once again, the College experienced no significant outbreak of illness.

Much worse followed later in 1933. One of the boys, P. O'Neill, had to enter hospital in February, but this was apparently for some routine purpose.[192] Then on 20 April Andrew Gallagher, who was fifteen years old and hailed from the city of Londonderry in N. Ireland, was rushed into Macclesfield Hospital suffering from appendicitis, and died that same day. His body was returned to Shrigley on the 21st; Dr Pennington used his local influence to win permission for the interment to be in the College grounds; and in the presence of his three brothers and an uncle, Andrew was buried on the evening of the 23rd [193]. Six months or so later, near the beginning of the 1933-34 school year, Shrigley suffered its second fatality. Having spent the 'past few weeks' in the College Infirmary, Daniel McAfee was admitted to Macclesfield Isolation Hospital on 2 November with 'some form of diphtheria ... which has been prevalent lately.' There being 'no hope of his recovery', the last sacraments were administered on the 4th. He died on the evening of the 5th and with his father and brothers in attendance, he was buried at Shrigley on 7 November.[194]

The sequel to this second bereavement was lengthy and exceedingly disruptive of College life. On the day after Daniel's funeral the local Medical Officer of Health conducted an inspection of the College and ordered everyone there to be inoculated against diphtheria, a major exercise which took place on the following day.[195] By 11 November Shrigley had effectively been divided into two communities, with sixty boys being held in virtual isolation; and on the 12th 'all class work [was] suspended.'[196] A fortnight later a doctor arrived to 'swab the throat and nose of likely germ carriers.'[197] An attempt was made on 24 November to restart school work, albeit with classes being given 'on alternate days to both sections of boys'.[198] The medical authorities then 'enforced' a more restricted but very tough regime. Twenty-seven boys were 'strictly isolated' in the newly-built

[190] *Ibid.*, 6, 9, 11-15 & 19 Jan. 1932.
[191] *Ibid.*, 12 Jan. 1932.
[192] *Ibid.*, 14 Feb. 1933.
[193] *Ibid.*, 20-23 April 1933.
[194] *Ibid.*, 2, 4-5 & 7 Nov. 1933. For photographs of Daniel McAfee and the cemetery, see KILDUFF, *Shrigley 1929-2004*, pp. 117, 125.
[195] *Ibid.*, 9 Nov. 1933.
[196] *Ibid.*, 11-13 Nov. 1933.
[197] *Ibid.*, 23 Nov. 1933.
[198] *Ibid.*, 24 Nov. 1933.

1. Shrigley Hall c. 1929.

2. Publicity Photograph 1933.

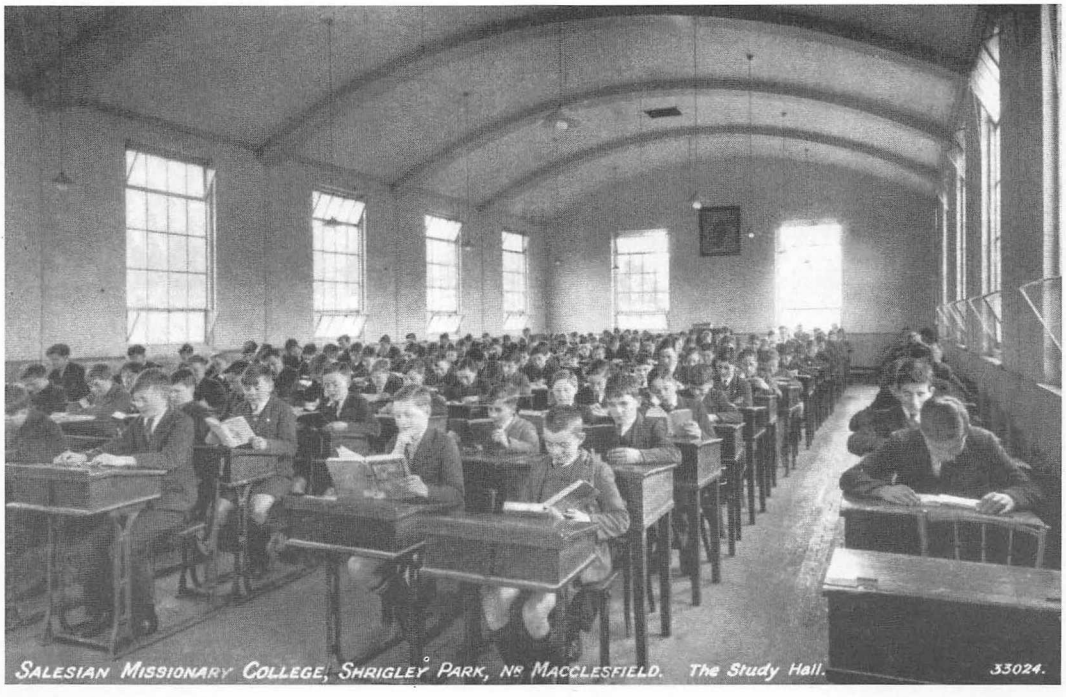
3. Fr. Aeneas Tozzi.

4. Fr. Adolfo Tornquist.

5. Fr. Angelo Franco.

6. Fr. Joseph Ciantar.

7. The 'Temporary' Chapel in the Martyrs Wing.



8. The New Study Hall.

9.The Alternative Design by Bower Norris & Reynolds.

10. John Hoey Cuts the First Sod, 1 April 1934.

Study Hall, where they were joined by Fr. Dunne and Bros. Vincent Donohue and George Martin, and later by Fr. Fahey; and where the entire group ate, slept and conducted religious services.[199] The rest of the school resumed its usual timetable and routine, though on 1 December everyone had to undergo a second inoculation.[200] The crisis continued, however, and on 17 December the worst cases, including Fr. Dunne and Bro. George, were further isolated to a cottage in the College grounds, whereupon their fellow patients re-joined the community.[201] Fr. Dunne and four boys did likewise on 31 December, leaving Bro. George and two boys still isolated.[202] When their circumstances returned to normal is unrecorded.

Having eventually receded, the threat of diphtheria did not recur, but there was little respite from other illness. By 15 March 1934 four or five boys were 'down with 'flu' and the heightened anxiety of recent months prompted the immediate vaccination of thirty-two pupils.[203] A week later, with some twenty boys having succumbed, examinations were discontinued and a programme of outdoor work was arranged for those fit enough to undertake it.[204] Vincent Screen was not one of them. By the 29th he had developed pneumonia and was in a 'very serious' condition. Fortunately, a Mrs. Magee, mother of one of the boys and a certified nurse, who was paying a visit to Shrigley, extended her stay so that she could look after Screen 'night and day'.[205] On 1 April the first sod was cut on the site proposed for the new church but many, including Fr. Franco, were too ill to attend.[206] Screen was anointed on 5 April and, having developed pleurisy, was admitted to Manchester Royal Infirmary four days later where, ultimately, he recovered.[207] As Screen left for hospital 'the tide [was already] turning' for his colleagues, though for a while longer it remained impossible to offer a full range of classes because both staff and boys were affected. The normal timetable was only resumed on 7 May, almost two months after the outbreak began.[208]

To complete what was from this point of view at least a miserable two years, there was a further death in December 1934 whose cause, however, is unrecorded. All we know is that a second-year student, Patrick Wosser, was admitted to Manchester Royal Infirmary where he died on 5 December. He too was buried at Shrigley, on 7 December.[209]

[199] *Ibid.*, 25 & 28 Nov. 1933.
[200] *Ibid.*, 1 Dec. 1933.
[201] *Ibid.*, 17 Dec. 1933.
[202] *Ibid.*, 31 Dec. 1933.
[203] *Ibid.*, 15-16 March 1934.
[204] *Ibid.*, 23 & 26 March 1934.
[205] *Ibid.*, 29 March 1934.
[206] *Ibid.*, 1 April 1934.
[207] *Ibid.*, 5-6 & 9 April 1934.
[208] *Ibid.*, 16-17 April & 7 May 1934.
[209] *Ibid.*, 5 & 7 Nov. 1934.

Although another boy, Joseph Powton had to leave the College, having been diagnosed as having a weak heart,[210] there was then a respite of just over two years before the onset of yet another major 'flu epidemic in January 1937. Two boys were admitted to hospital in that month, Thomas Hickey for a routine procedure, but James Cummins had 'dangerous glands and throat'.[211] By the 29th ten boys were crowded into the infirmary and the customary concert for Don Bosco's feast day two days later was cancelled because, by then, many others were also unwell. As the number of sick grew they were all moved into the smaller of the two dormitories and, once again, all classes were suspended.[212] By 3 February Desmond Sheehan was in 'great danger'. His parents and other relatives were summoned. He died on the 5th and was buried at Shrigley on the 8th.[213] Meanwhile, Fr. Musgrave had been 'moved to a home in Manchester for better treatment'. A number of boys remained 'very poorly'; there was even 'a little pneumonia'; and one pupil, Joseph Murphy, continued to cause serious anxiety before the outbreak eventually abated.[214]

Towards the close of the decade there was a good deal of anxiety but nothing to compare with the distressing and highly disruptive events of earlier years. In January 1939, a number of boys succumbed to 'flu but this time the outbreak proved to be less serious, except for R. Birch who was in hospital for a while with pneumonia.[215] Finally, in February 1940 a change in the timetable was instituted 'to counteract [the] influenza' currently prevalent in the locality. In addition the boys were required to gargle at regular intervals and went to bed early for several days.[216]

[210] *Ibid.*, 16 Sept. 1936.
[211] *Ibid.*, 7 & 13 Jan. 1937.
[212] *Ibid.*, 29-31 Jan. & 1-2 Feb. 1937.
[213] *Ibid.*, 3-6 & 8 Feb. 1937.
[214] *Ibid.*, 4 & 6, 10-11 Feb. 1937.
[215] SDB.GB.SH/I/4, House Chronicle, 8-11 Jan. 1939.
[216] *Ibid.*, 17 & 19 Feb. 1940.

Chapter Eleven

PHILIP TILDEN'S EARLY CAREER

If, when Philip Tilden's new church was consecrated in July 1938, he and those then living at Shrigley had known that it would be over two decades – October 1958 to be precise[217] – before a funeral Mass was held there, they would have been profoundly relieved; and probably, in view of the experience of the early and mid-1930s, not a little surprised.

During his many previous visits there Tilden had come to:

> something of [an] appreciation of the religious life of the Salesians ... as I viewed, first from without, and then more from within, the great unselfishness of their lives; and as I watched these boys from Ireland, Scotland and the North of England, I, who expected possibly to see some shrinking from the future in the faces of young human beings, saw an even greater happiness, not of resignation but acceptance.[218]

This gave him pause for thought over many years. Shrigley left a deep impression on Tilden, and not merely because, to his considerable disappointment, the church there was his only completed ecclesiastical commission. There was much more to it than this. Despite earlier successes, he obtained little other work in the 1930s and only narrowly avoided bankruptcy. The project at Shrigley, therefore, came at the lowest point in his fortunes, bridging a very considerable gap between his glamorous early career and the less dramatic but notable achievements of his later years. He was also personally affected by his encounter with the Salesians, the simplicity and lack of sophistication of whose way of life was in such stark contrast to his own. And so, having charted Shrigley's progress to the point where we must soon consider its greatest single project, we must first of all examine Tilden's origins and early progress before he embarked on 'one of his most unusual and personally satisfying commissions'.[219]

Philip Tilden was born on 31 May 1887 into a solidly respectable upper-middle class English family. A close friend of Prime Minister Arthur Balfour and fa-

[217] Damien Cocksey, a student in Upper Rhetoric, died at Shrigley on 4 October 1958. For a photograph of his burial service, see KILDUFF, *Shrigley 1929-2004*, p. 117.

[218] P. TILDEN, *True Remembrances: the Memoirs of an Architect* (London, 1954), (hereafter TILDEN, *True Remembrances*), p. 144.

[219] J. BETTLEY, *Lush and Luxurious: The Life and Work of Philip Tilden 1887-1956* (Royal Institute of British Architects, London 1987), (hereafter BETTLEY, *Lush and Luxurious*), p.20. Unless otherwise stated, the rest of this section is based on this work, which was published to mark the Institute's Exhibition to mark the centenary of Tilden's birth.

mous himself for the discovery of synthetic rubber, Tilden's father, Sir William, held Chairs of Chemistry firstly at Mason College, Birmingham, and then from 1894 at the Royal College of Science in London. Apparently, however, it was Tilden's mother, Lady Charlotte, who exerted the chief formative influence on her only son, encouraging him as a child to play with bricks rather than with soldiers.

Following preparatory school in Hemel Hempstead, Tilden was educated at Bedales which specialised in arts and crafts (where he was taught to draw by the distinguished Malcolm Powell); and at Rugby School; and shortly before his mother's premature death in 1905 he began studying at the Architectural Association in London. Within a couple of years he became estranged from his father, who had taken as his second wife someone twenty years his junior, and began to strike out on his own – travelling in France and north Africa, and building up an impressive range of artistic and literary contacts at home. Shortly after leaving the Architectural Association in 1908, he became articled to Thomas E. Colcutt. This led on to the partnership of Colcutt, Hamp & Tilden where, significantly, Tilden practised principally on his own account and not collaboratively.

Tilden's first completed building was c. 1910, a small house at Hindhead in Somerset for David Ker, an author. Operating at times both as an architect and as a contractor, he went on to remodel a house at Townshead in Cornwall for a Dr. Chown; and then, much more ambitiously, to extend Kingston Russell in Dorset for George Gribble, a London businessman; and then to rebuild Porth-en-alls at Prussia Cove in Cornwall for the Behrens brothers. Work on this last project, however, was halted by the outbreak of the First World War and was never subsequently completed. Designs for other clients, at least one of which evoked favourable comment in the architectural press, remained unexecuted, and for a while he flirted with the arts and crafts movement in Chipping Camden, Oxfordshire. After what had begun to look like a promising start to his career the early years of the war proved very difficult for Tilden, both publicly and privately.

Homosexual at this stage, Tilden was smitten by a young man, Robert, who ran a tin mine at Gurnard's Head on the north coast of Cornwall with his mother, and who was tragically killed in a motor-cycle accident. Shortly afterwards, in July 1914, on the eve of international hostilities and aged twenty-seven, Tilden married Robert's mother, a forty-one-year-old Swedish widow, Caroline Bodin, who, though born illegitimate, claimed to be directly descended from the old Swedish royal family, the Vasas. Whatever the truth of this particular matter, Caroline had certainly led an eventful life prior to marrying Tilden. After the demise of her first husband (who, according to her, was a Swedish Count and by whom she had Robert) she had studied art and medicine in Edinburgh, and had travelled extensively in Asia and Africa. Although her marriage to Tilden eventually proved happy and lasting, it did not get off to a good start. To his father's horror, Tilden did not enlist. He also left Colcutt and Hamp, albeit with little or nothing

to his own account, making ends meet by chicken farming at the couple's first home on Dartmoor, and by designing book plates. By 1915 he was in the midst of a mental crisis, possibly a nervous breakdown, due in part at least to the difficulty of reconciling his homosexual tendencies with his newly married state. Indeed, for a short period in 1917 he and Caroline lived apart. By then, however, having obtained a certificate of total exemption from war service, Tilden had also established and cultivated the connection which above all others was to produce a dramatic change in his fortunes. It was, appropriately, at Prussia Cove in April 1916 that he met Agnes, daughter of the wealthy art collector, critic and mountaineer, Sir Martin Conway. Tilden's friendship with the Conways – they became in effect his second family – 'was perhaps the most fortunate event in [his] life, because from it came, indirectly, all his important commissions of the 1920s'.[220]

At this point it is important to stress that, despite his various vicissitudes, Tilden had developed into a striking character. He was also a multi-talented craftsman – a painter, a fine draughtsman and an occasional sculptor, and a pianist, a water diviner, and an expert mimic to boot; in other words a considerable personality – someone difficult to ignore in any circumstances.[221] Tilden's first project for Sir Martin involved the further restoration of the family's home at Allington Castle in Kent, work which had been initiated several years before the war and which continued intermittently until the early 1930s. He also assisted Agnes Conway with the design and layout of the women's section of the Imperial War Museum at Crystal Palace. Then, following the death of Sir Martin's first wife, Katrina Marble, Tilden was engaged for the refurbishment of Saltwood Castle, also in Kent, which Sir Martin inherited through his second marriage to Iva, widow of Reginald Lawson.

In addition to personally employing Tilden more or less continuously for some two decades, Conway introduced him to many other wealthy clients. The first of these was Gordon Selfridge, who commissioned Tilden to design a flamboyant tower to cap his great store in Oxford Street, and also a massively grandiose sequence of castles to cover Hengistbury Head in Dorset. Neither scheme ultimately proceeded beyond the drawing board but the skilfully conceived plans significantly enhanced Tilden's reputation and brought him a salary or retainers for many years.[222] Another of Conway's introductions was to Sir Louis Mallet, formerly British Ambassador in Constantinople. The commission which followed – at the late medieval, half-timbered house at Otham in Kent – was less valuable than the further contacts to which it led. These included the so-

[220] BETTLEY, *Lush and Luxurious*, p. 9.

[221] Tilden also had aspirations as a novelist and the bulk of the Tilden Mss in the British Architecture Library at the Royal Institute of British Architects in Portland Place, London, consist of unpublished novels, though one work was published, *Noah* (London 1932).

[222] BETTLEY, *Lush and Luxurious*, p. 11.

ciety hostess Mrs. Charles (Mary) Hunter of Hill Hall in Essex for whom Tilden designed a town house in George Street; Daisy, Countess of Warwick, for whom he worked at Easton Lodge; and Vita Sackville-West who persuaded him to become engaged in a project at Long Crendon Manor in Buckinghamshire for Laline Hohler.

These contacts led in their turn to further introductions, and to further commissions: for example, from Sir Philip and Lady Ottoline Morrell at Garsington; and perhaps most substantially from Sir Philip Sassoon, private secretary to Lloyd George, at Port Lympne overlooking Romney Marsh; at Trent Park in Middlesex;[223] and in London's Park Lane. Tilden went on to design and then extend Lloyd George's new house – Bron-y-de – at Churt; to work for Dudley Ward M.P. and Lord Beaverbrook; and he was employed by Winston Churchill in substantially extending Chartwell. The bulk of these opportunities involved alterations and/or additions to country properties and, indeed, Tilden also designed for King George V cottages for the royal estate at Sandringham, although they were never built. His work, however, was even more varied than this. He produced a bookplate for the Prince of Wales; designed a country club for Martin Poulsen at Datchet on the banks of the Thames opposite Windsor Home Park; and was consulting architect to J. S. Fry and Sons, the chocolate manufacturers, in the period when they moved their premises from the centre of Bristol out to Somerdale.

It would be difficult, therefore, to identify a busier or more successful architect than Tilden in the decade or so from 1917. His lifestyle altered dramatically. His small house in Devon, where he had been engaged in chicken farming to make ends meet, was soon exchanged for a much larger one, Rowden near Sampford Courtenay, also in Devon. In addition to the sixteenth-century house, the estate had cottages and over 500 acres. This was followed by the purchase of a London house in Pelham Crescent where he and Caroline entertained on a grand scale. In 1919 Tilden was among the founder members and a director of one of the most fashionable London nightclubs, The Embassy. He became a Governor of the Old Vic Theatre – in the period when it was extensively re-modelled - and he established an office in Morley House, Regent Street. He never learned to drive but travelled widely not only by train but also in a chauffeured car, on permanent hire from Harrods. The quality of his professional work as an architect was formally recognised by his election on 16 January 1929, on the nomination of the Council of the Institute, to a fellowship of the Royal Institute of British Architects[224] – just as Tozzi was clinching the outline deal on Shrigley.

[223] Glimpses of the exotic country-house world which Tilden routinely inhabited before he became involved in the project at Shrigley may be gained from descriptions of Sassoon's Trent Park in R. RHODES James, *Bob Boothby: A Portrait* (London, 1991), pp. 71-72, 152, 449.

[224] British Architecture Library, Royal Institute of British Architects, Certificate of Fellowship, no. 2650, 16 Jan. 1929.

By this time, however, following the Stock Market Crash which led to the Slump, Tilden's star was ironically but definitely in the descendant. The volume of work which came his way dropped precipitately towards the end of the 1920s. For a man who had become accustomed to spending money as quickly as he earned it, this constituted a crisis. The pattern of his work had been dominated not by corporate clients but by private individuals, who tended to regard architects as a superior form of servant and who were routinely tardy in paying their bills. Indeed, part of Tilden's success was based on his treatment of clients as friends whom he was reluctant to press for payment. At the close of the 1920s, following over a decade of hectic success, his future looked increasingly bleak.

Chapter Twelve

TILDEN AND TOZZI

As is already clear, the building of a new Church dedicated to Don Bosco was from the earliest stages an integral part of the plan for the development of Shrigley. According to the *Salesian Bulletin* for July-August 1930:

> one of the large rooms [in the House] has been turned into a very devotional little chapel, [but] in the course of time the Congregation contemplates building its own Chapel in the spacious grounds of the College.[225]

Nor did the creation in 1931 of a larger chapel than the original one, on the ground floor of the new Martyrs' Wing, lead to any revision of this plan. This facility was twice described as 'temporary' in the issue of the *Bulletin* for July-August 1931, a term which was repeated in the issue for March-April 1933.[226]

Early in the following year, no doubt prompted by Tozzi, the pace of publicity for the new venture began to gather momentum. The *Bulletin* for January-February 1934 spoke of a proposal:

> on foot to create at the Missionary College at Shrigley a shrine in honour of, and in thanksgiving to, Blessed John Bosco for the many great favours granted to the English [*sic*] Province since its inception in 1887 ... We recommend the scheme to our co-operators and to the Old Boys of our Colleges and hope for their hearty support.[227]

It was clearly understood that the project could not be successfully completed without substantial external benefactions though, true to their tradition, this did not prevent the Salesians from pressing ahead with its inauguration – even in the midst of a severe economic depression, the effects of which were nowhere more keenly experienced in England than in the north-west where the cotton industry had been in terminal decline since the end of the war. Urging generosity in any form, the article went on to announce Tozzi's address at the Provincial House in Battersea, and promised further details in future issues. These duly appeared in the following number, together with an advertisement outlining the intention to open a 'Memorial Book' in which names of benefactors of the scheme would be

[225] *S.B.*, Vol. XXII, no. 4 (July-Aug. 1930), pp. 106-107.

[226] *S.B.*, Vol. XXIII, no. 4 (July-Aug. 1931), pp. 103-104; Vol. XXV, no. 2 (March-April 1933), pp. 45-47.

[227] *S.B.*, Vol. XXVI, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1934), p. 25.

permanently inscribed, earning them perpetual remembrance in future Masses said at the shrine.[228]

On Easter Sunday, 1 April 1934, this public commitment began its march to reality when the first sod was cut on the ground, immediately adjacent to the main House, which had been chosen as the site of the new Church. There had as usual been High Mass at 9.30 a.m.

> At 10.45 a.m. all the boys and community assemble[d] in the front Hall before the statue of Blessed John Bosco, beautifully decorated for the occasion, to sing a hymn; they then proceed[ed], accompanied by the Band, to the site of the new Church where, at the same time as the Holy Father was declaring Don Bosco a Saint, the first sod was cut by Master John Hoey, who had been chosen by ballot. Unfortunately, the widespread sickness robbed the day and the occasion of much of its solemnity, and of the presence of Fr. Rector.[229]

John Hoey had been recruited by Ciantar from the Christian Brothers' School in Dublin. He was destined to become Rector of Shrigley in the 1970s, and thereafter served in South Africa into this century.[230] Although it was to be some time before serious work on the Church began, it was entirely apposite to make some kind of start on the day of Don Bosco's canonisation. In addition to the obvious spiritual significance, there was an urgent need to generate publicity with all that that might produce in the way of benefactions. From every viewpoint a ceremony on 1 April 1934 was too good an opportunity to miss. In answering queries as to when the actual building work would begin, the Salesians indicated that everything depended 'upon the generosity and charity of the friends and clients of Don Bosco.'[231]

When Philip Tilden first became involved in the project is uncertain. Twenty years later in his autobiography he wrote of 'the day when the Fr. Rector and a few boys with spades went out in the biting wind to cut the first gash in the sleeping hillside'.[232] As Franco was not at the ceremony, and as many more than a 'few' boys were (but only one with a spade),[233] Tilden's remarks in this instance were no more than a rhetorical flourish in his always florid prose. There is no direct evidence of his presence at Shrigley on this or any previous date and it seems that he was absent from this inaugural event. It is highly unlikely, howev-

[228] *S.B.*, Vol. XXVI, no. 2 (Feb. 1934), p. 53 and back cover.

[229] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 1 April 1934.

[230] The author had the benefit of conversations with the late Fr. Hoey in the late summer of 2002. Fr. Hoey was Rector of Shrigley 1961-63. For photographs of him cutting the first sod and, much later, preaching in the church at Shrigley, see KILDUFF, *Shrigley 1929-2004*, pp. 35, 122.

[231] *S.B.*, Vol. XXVI, no. 6 (June 1934), pp. 222-224.

[232] TILDEN, *True Remembrances*, p. 143.

[233] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 1 April 1934; KILDUFF, *Shrigley 1929-2004*, p. 35.

er, that he had yet to make his first visit to Shrigley. It would have been uncharacteristic, indeed unprofessional, if he had submitted a finished design and drawings without familiarising himself with both the general location and the chosen site. Before he won the commission he would have been unknown to the bulk of the community (and in particular to the chronicler) and any visit or visits, therefore, went unrecorded. Nevertheless, he maintained that:

> there were many days that were auspicious on that wonderful site, before a sod was cut or a stone was laid, and when I first visualised its form and qualities.[234]

We do not know, therefore, when Tilden became engaged in the project or, indeed, when he first encountered the Salesians. We are much clearer, however, as to how this conjunction occurred. According to Tilden's own testimony, which is all that is available, 'I was introduced to this other religious world governed from Rome firstly by my Secretary, Alfonso Crivelli, who made my interests his own in spite of feeling that he was serving the damned'.[235] In fact Crivelli was no mere secretary; in today's parlance business manager would be much nearer the mark, for at Tilden's lowest point Crivelli lent him money.[236] He was an Italian based in London and was likely to have been a solidly reputable member of an expatriate community which was much smaller and more tightly-knit then than it is today. So too, albeit in a rather different way, was Tozzi at Provincial headquarters in Battersea. It is reasonable to surmise that the two became acquainted via mutual contacts through the capital's Italian community. Furthermore, although Tilden had never previously been commissioned to design an ecclesiastical building, he had 'for years been feeling about for a church plan which would satisfy modern conditions and requirements'; and had gone so far as to complete:

> a little drawing of what I considered to be the perfect solution to the planning of a small church for some village or townlet. It became like a '*couveuse*' with her little chickens poking their heads out from under her warm wings. So did my little huddled church look like a sitting hen, with its chapels tucked around her, each separate in their lives yet attached to the living body by protective mother-love.[237]

Crivelli almost certainly knew of the existence of this drawing. It was after all a requirement of his role to be familiar with the range of commissions which his employer would be inclined to consider seriously. Having heard directly or

[234] TILDEN, *True Remembrances*, p. 143.
[235] *Ibid.*, p. 147.
[236] BETTLEY, *Lush and Luxurious*, p. 20.
[237] P. TILDEN, '*First Church of St. John Bosco, Shrigley*', *The Builder*, 22 June 1948, p. 492; TILDEN, *True Remembrances*, p. 143.

through his compatriots of Tozzi's project at Shrigley, he brought the two men together. Then, according to Tilden, 'Fr. Tozzi whipped away the plan from me, and in a few weeks I was confronted with the task of designing the new Shrine'.[238]

The equation, however, was not a purely bilateral one and matters did not proceed quite as smoothly as the foregoing suggests. Whether Tozzi publicly invited tenders, we do not know. What is certain is that there was at least one other contender for the commission. There has survived a design plan in the form of a detailed drawing of the proposed exterior of a church. This was submitted by two partners, T. Bowen Norris and F. McReynolds, the former (like Tilden) a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and the latter an Associate Fellow.[239] They envisaged a very large building indeed, free-standing and with a central nave, two side aisles, transepts, and an octagonal tower just to the west of an apse at the east end. The proportions were those of at least a small cathedral. Moreover, the building was clearly designed to be attractive to Tozzi and his compatriots, being frankly Italianate in appearance – the kind of church of which there were, and are, multiple examples south of the Alps. While we know that this tender was not accepted, there remains the question: why? It may simply have been judged to be too ambitious and expensive an option. And yet it would appear, as one would expect, that this or some other alternative was given serious consideration. Tilden recalled 'a stiff fight with the Italian element in the Order [*sic*] over the structure [of the church] itself.'[240] There was a serious debate, not just in the minds of those involved, but in vigorous exchanges as to what would be the most appropriate design.

In these exchanges Tilden was very much his own man, thoroughly civilised and urbane but fundamentally unprepared to compromise. Moreover, his convictions were firmly based on the experience of his own travels, about which he was briskly articulate:

> It has always been the habit of the Italians to slab their buildings with façade decoration, partly owing to their use of indigenous marble, and partly owing to their basilican planning that seems inherent in the Italian blood. One sees it everywhere in Italy – that long nave, in most cases showing obvious functionalistic design, built of mere brick or any material to hand, and then before it an absolutely unrelated façade of glorified portal and window, almost childishly naïve in its application.[241]

[238] TILDEN, *True Remembrances*, p. 143.

[239] A reproduction of this drawing, with details of its authors, exists in the form of a plate-glass negative, which is uncatalogued in the Provincial Archives in Stockport. I am grateful to M. Kilduff for providing me with a print from this negative.

[240] TILDEN, *True Remembrances*, p. 145.

[241] *Ibid.*

Tilden felt that this style of architecture would be profoundly inappropriate at Shrigley. In contrast:

> here in this stony country I had magnificent building stone, mouse-grey and tinged with soft blue and green, and in my Shrine I was able to leave the walls externally, and in great measure internally, sheer cliffs of hand-tooled rock. Thus can I leave them to the mercy of time, which decorates in our climate with a surer touch than any hand of man.[242]

Once commissioned, however, Tilden proved himself to be keenly sensitive to the detailed requirements of his brief; always prepared to adapt and adjust in the light of circumstances as the project developed; and, as we shall see, he seized several opportunities of bringing his own talents as an artist and sculptor to bear on the finished product.

In addition to competition from fellow architects and arguments with the 'Italian element' about structure and design, Tilden had a third problem to overcome – a fraught relationship with Clayton, by now the regular building contractor used by Tozzi at Shrigley. Tilden's home was in Devon in the far south-west; his office and staff were in London; and most of his work (or at least the contacts which might lead to work) was in Kent, Sussex and the other home counties. Besides being in financial difficulties he was physically badly stretched, seemingly always rushing from one place to another and a frequent guest at station hotels.[243] During most of his visits Tilden stayed at Shrigley itself, 'being given a bedroom with a hot pipe running through it, and many a time when I had unfrozen one end of my body, I had to reverse myself to get warm at the other end.'[244] Clayton became irritated by what he felt were Tilden's infrequent trips to Shrigley and, as the latter explained to his wife in September 1935, there was even more to the matter than this:

> I have been truly rushed and harassed and unexpectedly landed up here at Shrigley last night to see Fr. Tozzi … I had to come here (with no warning) to deal with the situation. Clayton (the builder) has been abusing me a good deal for not coming and actually wrote a letter to Mr. Simpson … telling him that they ought to have an architect from the North instead of me. He is a real dangerous man.[245]

Tilden dealt very firmly with this and nothing came of it, though relations between the two men could never have been smooth after this episode. Clayton

[242] *Ibid.*

[243] See the Tilden Mss. in the British Architecture Library at the Royal Institute of British Architects, London, (hereafter Tilden Mss.), Letters from Tilden to his wife, 15 June, ? & 10 Sept. & 24 Oct. 1935.

[244] TILDEN, *True Remembrances*, p. 144.

[245] Tilden Mss., Tilden to his wife, ? Sept. 1935.

swallowed his grievances and got on with the job, suspecting that if he did so there would be further work for him at Shrigley in the future (which there was).[246] In any case by this stage not only was the die cast but Tilden and Tozzi had become good friends, their previous debates about the most appropriate design for the church having been superseded by theological and other discourses as they 'walked in the great avenues at Shrigley … for many an hour'. 'Such settled benignity', Tilden said, 'I had never experienced before, and Shrigley became an oasis as compared with the hubbub of the outside world'.[247]

[246] As late as 1962 the firm of John Clayton Ltd. (which had by then merged with Messrs. Cooper Bros.) was engaged in consultations about work at Shrigley (ASC, G. Harris, Chartered Architect to Fr. Hall, Provincial, 21 June 1962).

[247] TILDEN, *True Remembrances*, pp. 142, 145.

Chapter Thirteen

THE BUILDING OF THE CHURCH AND SHRINE

Over four years and three months separated the sod-cutting ceremony from the formal opening of the Church on 24 July 1938. There were long periods of inactivity in the interim and it was only from the early autumn of 1936 that building work became rapid and sustained. This was not accidental. A carefully phased plan of operation was decided on from the start, as is revealed in the following minute of the meeting of the Provincial Council of the Anglo-Irish Province held on 7 January 1935.

> The building of the proposed new Church of St. John Bosco at Shrigley was discussed. The cost is estimated at £12,000; and it was proposed to divide the work into three parts – to be carried out in three successive years. This year only the foundations are to be laid, and the plans for this only will be submitted. Next year the plans can be submitted for the next stage of the work, and finally during the following year the completion of the work can be taken in hand. This method will obviate the difficulty of having to make a big loan at the present moment.[248]

Financial considerations did not induce paralysis but they nevertheless required matters to be taken forward with circumspection.

A month or so after this meeting Tilden made his first recorded visit to Shrigley, arriving with Tozzi on 9 February 1935. Two days later a 'plan of the proposed new church' was put up on the College noticeboard; and later that month a model of the church, donated by Dr. Pennington, was 'placed on view in the parlour'.[249] More importantly, work began on clearing the site for the building, the first stages of which involved the destruction of part of the extensive gardens left over from the Lowther era. Once this had been done, a start was made on digging the foundations and 'all the boys and many members of the community' devoted their entire Easter holidays to the task.[250] This work continued throughout May when the first formal contract (for the foundations at a cost of £1,752.7.0d.) was completed and signed; and into June, by which time '£2,000 has been subscribed for the new Church … of course only a small part of the total cost but, confident in the generosity of his helpers, Fr. Franco … has decided

[248] SDB.GB. 'Minutes of the Provincial Council of the Anglo-Irish Province', 7 Jan. 1935. I am grateful to Fr. C. Garrick SDB for furnishing me with copies of relevant extracts from these minutes.

[249] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 9, 11 & 24 Feb. 1935.

[250] *Ibid.*, 14 Feb. & May 1935.

to go ahead'.[251] On 15 June Bishop Moriarty arrived at Shrigley for a three-day visit, the chief purpose of which was the laying of the foundation stone of the Church. That evening he presided over the celebration of the canonisation of the two sixteenth-century English martyrs, John Fisher and Thomas More, promising to donate two annual prizes 'for the best essays on the English martyrs'; and assuring his audience that 'he always speaks of Shrigley as the Missionary College of the Diocese'. The following morning saw him in the 'temporary' chapel for the ordination of '3 deacons, 5 tonsures and 4 minor orders', the first ceremony of its kind at Shrigley, from where the assembled company moved to the site of the new Church.[252]

Bad weather marred the ceremony. According to Tilden, who was present, 'the stone was laid in the drenching rain'. There followed 'a great procession ... all in the glory of vestments covered up by umbrellas and coats and mackintoshes'.[253] Promising his wife that he would tell her 'of the whole ceremony when we meet', he meanwhile enclosed the programme for the event. This promised that, when completed, the building would 'recall the glories of the old country shrines of the ages of Faith', and that it would 'accommodate 400 people'. 'Every stone' would be 'a thank-offering' and details were given of the cost of one or more stones; of the arrangements in train for the names of donors to be inscribed in the 'Memorial Book'; and of the spiritual benefits to be derived therefrom.[254] In spite of the weather, this occasion was explicitly designed to be a major landmark on the route to the successful completion of the project. From this point onwards there was no going back, at least, that is, without enormous loss of face.

Two months later, in August 1935, Tilden's financial difficulties entered their most acute phase and, in his correspondence with his wife, there was open talk of his possible bankruptcy.[255] Somehow or other this threat was averted only to be replaced in September with Clayton's attempt to have him removed as architect at Shrigley. While, however, he could not visit Shrigley as often as he and Clayton wished, there were additional consultations with the faithful Tozzi in London.[256] Tilden's next recorded visit north was in late October when, besides attending to his main business, he also delivered 'a short but very interesting and

[251] Tilden Mss., Box 1, Account Book. There were four certificates of payment under this contract – of 17 June, 11 July, 13 Aug. & 19 Nov. 1935. See also *S.B.*, Vol. XVII, no. 3 (May-June 1935), p. 87.

[252] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 15-17 June 1935; *S.B.* Vol. XXVII, no. 4 (July–Aug. 1935), pp. 114-115. Over 1,000 visitors attended Shrigley on the second day, a Sunday.

[253] TILDEN, *True Remembrances*, p. 144.

[254] Tilden Mss., Tilden to his wife, 19 June 1935, attached to which is the programme of events.

[255] Tilden Mss., Tilden to his wife, 22 Aug. 1935.

[256] See for example, Tilden Mss., Tilden to his wife, 15-17 Oct. 1935.

useful lecture' to the community and the boys 'on Architecture'.[257] During the mid-term break in November the boys continued to facilitate the project by labouring on the site (and simultaneously on the Sacred Heart Terrace).[258] In the *Salesian Bulletin* Tozzi continued to be frank about the degree of financial uncertainty:

> By their recent efforts the boys have saved an expenditure of about £200. At present the Fathers have only about enough funds to build the foundations, and the erection of the Church will cost, roughly, anything between £12,000 and £14,000. Where the rest of the money will come from no-one knows but the Fathers are relying mainly on offerings from benefactors for favours received. It is expected that the Church will be completed in about two or three years.[259]

It was at this point, in late 1935 or early 1936, that the project took on a new lease of life, for when the boys resumed their efforts at mid-term in February 1936 they were reported to be working not just on the site but also 'at the quarry'.[260] In the context with which he had now become thoroughly familiar Tilden had a distinct preference for building in local stone, but to have imported the necessarily substantial supplies from an external source would have proved very, and perhaps prohibitively, expensive. This turned out to be unnecessary. Towards the end of the long driveway which led from the College to the Lodge and gateway of the estate lay an 'old quarry' which subsequently provided excellent and ample supplies of Tilden's preferred material. This was now:

> opened up, the loose stone removed for road metal, and new slices and blocks of hard, virgin rock sheered off and worked by the cunning hands of a few men, a few bars and a few chisels. From that time on, day in day out, one could hear the tap-tapping of metal against stone deep down in the gulf of that quarry, and bit by bit the stones changed from meaningless lumps into things of quality and shape. And bit by bit the walls rose from the flat raft that sat the hill [*sic*] amongst the gigantic rhododendrons and sinuous snake-skin beeches.[261]

Once again the steady labour of the community and the boys was pressed into service. For the next several months no-one was allowed to return to the College via the driveway without bringing a cut stone or stones with them.[262] Back at the site piles of stones steadily accumulated. By the time Tilden returned for a further

[257] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 29 Oct. 1935.
[258] *Ibid.*, 5-7 Nov. 1935.
[259] *S.B.*, Vol. XXVII, no. 5 (Sept.-Oct. 1935), pp. 144-146.
[260] SDB.GBSH/I/3, House Chronicle, 25-26 Feb. 1936.
[261] TILDEN, *True Remembrances*, p. 144.
[262] Personal testimony of Fr. Albert Carette SDB.

weekend at Shrigley in March 1936 this process was well under way.[263] The *Bulletin* for March-April 1936 announced that the Salesians proposed 'to wait no longer'.[264]

By mid-summer that year the superstructure was beginning to rise above the foundations and the second phase of the building operations was completed. Fr. Hall took over as Rector from Fr. Franco in August 1936,[265] whereupon the third phase, the push for completion, began. By 1 October, with a new College year in full swing, the chronicler felt able to refer to a 'rapidly growing Church'.[266] This was a period of intense activity. Fr. Tornquist had returned during the summer, not just for a brief visit but for an extended holiday which concluded with his delivery of a stimulating 'Good Night' to the boys soon after the conclusion of their summer vacation.[267] It is difficult not to surmise that his financial assistance was once again forthcoming, though there is no evidence to suggest this other than his extended stay at Shrigley at this critical juncture. Tilden himself visited the College in early September, at the beginning of October, and again in mid-December. On the last two occasions there were major, formal meetings between him, Tozzi and Clayton.[268] On 1 October a second contract was signed: this was for the superstructure at a cost of £11,066.[269] At a later unknown date, possibly in December, there was a third contract, for the central heating system, valued at £350.[270] On 15 December the main parties assembled 'to settle outstanding points'. All was 'arranged and put in writing' and matters proceeded very smoothly thereafter.[271] In September 1937 Tozzi felt able to report to the Provincial Council that 'the Church was expected to be ready in June 1938'.[272] And despite the severe winter of 1937-38, when heavy falls of snow lay on the building site and the grounds for several weeks, it was.[273] The boys made their last major contribution to the venture in February 1938 when large numbers of them were engaged in clearing soil and rubble from around the walls, after which they landscaped the precincts.[274] The

[263] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 13 March 1936.

[264] *S.B.*, Vol. XXVIII, no. 2 (March–April 1936), p. 42.

[265] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 27 Aug. 1936.

[266] *Ibid.*, 1 Oct. 1936.

[267] *Ibid.*, 4 Sept. 1936.

[268] *Ibid.*, 12 Sept., 1 Oct., 13 & 15 Dec. 1936.

[269] Tilden Mss., Box 1, Account Book. Under this contract there were 19 certificates of payment in the period from 21 Sept. 1936 to c. late 1938 (the last two being undated).

[270] Tilden Mss., Box 1, Account Book. Under this contract there were two certificates of payment, dated 3 & 29 Dec. 1937. The system was supplied by the Economic Heating Co. of South Harrow, Middlesex.

[271] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 15 Dec. 1936.

[272] SDB.GB. 'Minutes of the Provincial Council of the Anglo-Irish Province', 22 Sept. 1937.

[273] KILDUFF, *Shrigley 1929-2004*, p. 37.

[274] SDB.GB.SH/I/4, House Chronicle, 23 & 28 Feb. 1938. See also KILDUFF, *Shrigley 1929-2004*, p. 4.

central space of the completed Church was available for an important non-liturgical function some time in advance of the consecration and formal opening. In early July 1938 some 550 members of the Legion of Mary from Manchester and Stockport came to Shrigley for a rally. Ciantar addressed them, and at 7.00 p.m. 'the band and choir entertained them in the new church – chairs were carried up and the band played in the sanctuary. The party left at 9.15'.[275]

What sort of building did Tilden create? The short answer to this central question as far as those who worshipped there are concerned is a beautiful, inspiring and uplifting space, to which those who used it regularly would add that it was eminently practical. Fortunately, in seeking to articulate his achievement further we have not just the evidence of the building itself as it exists today, but also of Tilden's own succinct resumé of what he was trying to do and of what in fact emerged.[276]

Although as a professional he had to construe and translate a brief, he had also and before anything else to lay out his own first principles, which he did as follows:

> Modern church requirements insist upon unrestricted vision, ample lighting without glare, easy seating access, and adequate heating.

Accordingly, he did not work to a pre-determined pattern of any kind. In fact the finished building could not easily be typified, being a broad mixture of Norman and Gothic with unique features which suited both the site and the express wishes of his paymasters. Chief among the former was the fact that the location was already raised and physically restricted, so Tilden's church was centrally tall in relation to its overall compass, and octagonal in shape in order to take full advantage of a constrained base. Chief among the latter was the requirement to design a shrine which:

> is not an ordinary church, for it should possess a certain monumental quality and all-sufficiency of plan, emphasising particularly the old mystical air of church tradition and, if possible, lifting the eyes above normal level.

The result was remarkably reminiscent of his original conception, formed long before he won the commission, of a '*couveuse*', a 'huddled church ... like a sitting hen, with its chapels tucked around her'.[277] A central, lantern-like tower threw light on the main altar at one end, the choir loft at the other, and the two

[275] *Ibid.*, 10 July 1938.

[276] Unless otherwise stated, the quotations which follow are drawn from P. TILDEN, '*First Church of St. John Bosco, Shrigley*', *The Builder*, 22 June 1948, (hereafter TILDEN, '*First Church*'), pp. 492-495.

[277] TILDEN, *True Remembrances*, p. 143.

substantial altars to either side. The other four points of the octagon, housing the four other side altars, were shrouded by much lower vaulting; their spaces providing a more mysterious ambience, whilst at the same time contributing to a broadly circular, processional route round the entire church. 'Hence', in Tilden's words:

> the plans of Shrigley Church. The centre octagon is 48 ft. across, with the four major arches leading to the nave, sanctuary and transepts being 24 ft. in width, and springing from a stone band 20 ft. above floor level. All subsidiary arches [however] spring from a 10 ft. datum and lead from Chapel to Chapel ... to form a complete processional way from altar to altar, their being seven [a High Altar and six side altars] in all.

There were then more practical matters:

> Over the western entry I have built a galley for the organ and choir, and at the eastern end, behind the high altar, a large and efficient sacristy. From this, at the very eastern end, a staircase leads up to four small guest chambers over the sacristy ceiling [testimony perhaps to his mixed experiences as a visitor[278]], two of them with glimpse windows into the church.

Even more fundamentally:

> A large fuel and heating chamber is constructed under the northern transept, cut in the solid rock, and from the same transept at church level, a stone bridge leads across to the main building of the community.

Thus, the Church was not free-standing. In the prevailing climate the bridge was essential, whilst also being symbolic of the indissolubility of the physical and the spiritual in the life of the College.

Tilden went on to describe the nature of the fabric, rejoicing in his ability to use natural, local material to achieve his desired effect:

> The whole of the exterior and interior is constructed of the mellow-coloured, mousey grey and soft greenish stone quarried from the park itself, and the string courses for the springing of the vaults and arches are of red Cheshire, thus bringing a little colour into its austerity of treatment. The whole of the ashlar is of reconstructed stone, varying in colour, and sand-blasted when green to harmonise with the general stonework. The interior vaulting throughout is of plaster upon expanded metal, hung from the steel purlins. The octagon ceiling is of gold, and [perhaps a hint here of frustration[279]] the

[278] Tilden's great affection for the Salesians did not prevent him from complaining about the very spartan facilities to which he and other visitors were subjected (TILDEN, *True Remembrances*, p. 144; Tilden Mss., Correspondence, Tilden to his wife, 6 & 14 Nov. 1952).

[279] The painting of the large panels on the internal superstructure was perhaps one area where economies were made in the original plan.

> plaster panels await a Michelangelo. ... The floor is paved with self-coloured tile squares, except under the seating, where wood blocks are used. The high windows in the octagon supply the major light access, and I intentionally arranged that the minor chapels should be more mysteriously dark. The plan achieves its aim in producing many vistas as one walks within from point to point, and with a 7 ft. crucifix hung 40 ft. above the floor over the sanctuary arch, the impression is of great space and height. Externally the roofs are of local soft blue-grey slate, and the flêche is of lead.

And then, returning to the broader, locational context:

> The church stands on a hill; embowered by gigantic trees, and a verdant profusion of rhododendrons, and is approached by stone stairways at the western end.

Tilden made valuable contributions beyond his architecture, painting the large picture placed above the altar of St. John Bosco in the northern transept and sculpting some of the external doorways. He also 'painted' the fourteen 'stations of the Cross ... upon aluminium, their treatment being isochromatic, and using the red Cheshire stone colour; they achieve their object in making them seem part and parcel of the structure, as though carved out of stone'. Little expense was spared in fitting out the interior. In particular the seven altars were composed of solid slabs of marble, as were the pillars of the baldachino over the High Altar; and the main internal stone pillars were elaborately carved by a local craftsman.[280] A huge bell was stationed outside the main door of the Church ready to call all to worship at this special place.[281] Key items were donated, the chalice for instance by Mr. Lomas[282] and, following pleas in the *Salesian Bulletin*, the pipeless Compton electronic organ by an unknown benefactor.[283] A special contribution in kind was made by Lay-Brother Reginald Wilkinson who, working in a makeshift forge constructed in the grounds, produced magnificent candlesticks and much other decorative ironwork, together with the massive, iron-clad main doors.[284] In his own highly-specialised way he too exemplified the cosmopolitan character of this collective enterprise. Born and bred in Leigh, Lancashire, he had

[280] Tilden, 'First Church', p. 493; *S.B.* Vol. XXX, no. 3 (May–June 1938), pp. 60-61; KILDUFF, *Shrigley 1929-2004*, pp. 110-116. Among the surviving albums of contemporary photographs is one containing many shots of the interior of the church as it neared completion, including some of this craftsman carving (SDB.GB.SH/V/3).

[281] This bell is now at Farnborough Abbey (oral testimony from Bro. Donald MacDonald SDB. Provincial House, Stockport).

[282] SDB.GB.SH/I/3, House Chronicle, 8 Dec. 1936.

[283] *S.B.*, Vol. XXX, no. 2 (March–April 1938), p. 40.

[284] SDB.GB.SH/I/4, House Chronicle, 12 Oct. & 29 Nov. 1937; *S.B.* Vol. XXV, no. 5 (Sept.–Oct. 1938), pp. 114-115. SDB.GBSH/V/3 contains several photographs of Bro. Reginald's work.

entered the Salesian novitiate aged 25 in 1926 and been professed in 1928. He spent the next three years in advanced technical training in Belgium, served in Ireland 1931-35, and then transferred to the Agricultural Technical School which Tozzi established at Blaisdon in Gloucestershire in that year. He was moved to Shrigley in November 1937 in time to make a distinguished contribution to the Church.[285]

We do not know how much the entire venture cost, but we do have details of the periodic payments made under the three contracts (incidentally the only set of such accounts extant in the Tilden archive).[286] Taken together, the contracts were for a total of £13,108, very substantially more than was paid for Shrigley Hall and the estate a decade earlier, and over £1,000 more than the estimate provided by Tozzi to the Provincial Council in 1935.[287] Moreover, although the contracts themselves have not survived, it is clear that they were for the fundamental work – the foundations, the superstructure, and the central heating – and did not include the elaborate fixtures and fittings. The costs of the latter were reduced by Tilden's paintings and sculpting; by Bro. Reginald's efforts; and by sundry gifts, some substantial. Nonetheless, while we know that the contractual costs were discharged as duly agreed, the sum for which the Salesians remained liable would appear to have been significant. It was publicly acknowledged at the time of the opening that 'a considerable debt still remains'[288] and later evidence confirms that this continued to be the case for many years. In May 1941, for example, Tozzi's successor as Provincial, Fr. Frederick Couche, admitted that:

> The great encumbrance of the house at present is the heavy amount of debt which still remains on the Church. But it is confidently hoped that, with the blessing of God which is clearly upon the work of Shrigley, the remainder of this heavy debt will be met, little by little.[289]

In the following year 'a very large part of the debt on the Church still remains'[290] and in April 1947 'the debts of Shrigley' were still regarded as 'a matter of much concern'.[291] Indeed, as late as August 1950:

> The financial position of Shrigley is still a matter which causes much anxiety, and every effort must still be made to reduce the debts as far as possible … [so that they may be] eliminated little by little … it is the duty of all

[285] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Bro. Reginald Wilkinson.
[286] Tilden Mss. Box 1, Account Book.
[287] SDB.GB. 'Minutes of the Provincial Council of the Anglo-Irish Province', 7 Jan. 1935.
[288] *S.B.*, Vol. XXX, no. 5 (Sept. – Oct. 1938), pp. 114-115.
[289] SDB.GB.PROV/VIS/I, pp. 32-33.
[290] *Ibid.*, p. 151.
[291] SDB.GB.PROV/VIS/III, p. 73.

> without exception to make all the efforts possible to lighten this heavy outstanding obligation.[292]

The lack of a significant income stream persisted. It was challenging enough to meet recurrent expenses. Capital debt was exceedingly difficult to service, and still more so to discharge. Yet of one matter we can be sure. Tilden's fees constituted only a very small part of the overall cost. It seems that he was paid £600, or less than 5% of the sum of the combined contracts, to which some expenses are likely to have been added.[293]

The ceremonies which marked the opening of the Church and Shrine took place on Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 July 1938.[294] On the evening of the 24th 'farewell' was said 'to the ... building that had been used as a chapel until that day'. Then, 'late in the evening light' the new Church was blessed by Archbishop Guerra, 'one of the few persons yet alive who [had] had the privilege of knowing Don Bosco'. He was there not just as a long-standing friend of Shrigley but also as the representative of Rinaldi's successor as Salesian Rector Major, Don Peter Ricaldone.

'From early morning' on the following day:

> the long drive, that wound over the high land and dipped suddenly past the quarry entrance on to the hidden main road, was grouped with slow-moving people, young and old alike, whilst now and again they made way for buses and motor cars crowded with folk from farther afield.[295]

It was estimated that over 5,000 people were present, in and around the new Church, when Bishop Moriarty celebrated Pontifical High Mass at 10.00 a.m. supported by Archbishop Guerra and Frs. Tornquist, Simonetti and Franco. Also there in addition to Fr. Tozzi were Dr. Morrisroe, Bishop of Achonry in Ireland; the Rectors of all the other Salesian Houses in England; local clergy led by Canon Kearney of Stockport; and many distinguished lay people including, besides Tilden, Alderman Alfred Byrne, Lord Mayor of Dublin, Mr. E. Lomas of Macclesfield, Alderman Hopkins of Stockport, and Councillor Holmes of Manchester. Guerra led Vespers at 3.00 p.m., after which there was a massive procession through the grounds, a sermon by Tozzi, Benediction, and finally Veneration of the Sacred Relic of Don Bosco. Later, Catholic Scouts competed for the Salesian Shield in front of the College and there was a Sacred Concert from

[292] SDB.GB.PROV/VIS/IV, 22-29 Aug. 1950 (this volume is not paginated).

[293] Tilden Mss., Correspondence, n.d. but probably 19 Nov. 1935.

[294] The Souvenir Programme of the Solemn Opening of the Church of St. John Bosco at Shrigley is at SDB.GB.SH/III/24.

[295] TILDEN, *True Remembrances*, pp. 145-146; *S.B.*, Vol. XXV, no. 5 (Sept.–Oct. 1938), pp. 114-115.

7.30 p.m. 'A colour film of the ceremonies was taken by one of the College benefactors'.[296]

Thus, a fine achievement was celebrated with liturgical magnificence and considerable style in front of a multitude. In terms of the number and quality of those attending it was undoubtedly the greatest single public occasion in Shrigley's history. Tilden was transported with delight.

> Never ... have I experienced a greater spiritual satisfaction than when I perceived that what I had created on paper was becoming, and had indeed by Divine Providence become, a shrine ... The great day of opening ... will ever remain clear in my mind, for it was the culmination of years of thought, and of hours of anxious preparation.[297]

He had probably earned less from this commission than from most of those he had previously completed, but few, if any, of them had attracted such a crowd and given him such deep personal satisfaction. Debts aside, Shrigley's biggest project of all had been brought to a triumphant conclusion.

[296] SDB.GB.SH/I/4, House Chronicle, 23-25 July 1938.
[297] TILDEN, *True Remembrances*, p. 145.

Chapter Fourteen

THE AFTERMATH

Faithful to his duty of aftercare, Tilden visited Shrigley on several occasions during the following two years.[298] There were difficulties with the new organ and the central heating system, and no doubt other teething troubles to attend to and matters to be checked and finally completed. And in any case his love of the College can only have been enhanced by the opening of the Church and its regular use. His visits to Shrigley were a balm to him and for a while he found it difficult not to return.

The film of the opening ceremonies was first shown at Shrigley by Fr. Hall on 4 January 1939, whereupon he took it on tour to a variety of locations in Britain and Ireland.[299] This may have contributed to the choice of Shrigley as the northern English site of the national Peace Pilgrimage in May 1939 when some 2,000 people processed around the grounds.[300] That, however, was the last such occasion for some considerable time. On the declaration of war with Germany some months later circumstances at Shrigley, as elsewhere, altered dramatically. Travel to and from Ireland became very difficult and, at times, impossible and the number of boys at the College fell sharply to 70. Because the Salesian School at Battersea in London was evacuated to Cowley on the outskirts of Oxford, the trainee philosophers at Cowley were moved to Shrigley, 'which completely disorganises the school'.[301] Shrigley had already taken in evacuees from Manchester, albeit with some difficulty, who arrived, were moved elsewhere, and then returned again.[302] Then, on 11 June 1940, the day after Italy entered the war, police arrived at Shrigley at 3.30 a.m. and arrested Fr. Roffinella and Bros. P. Gregorio and J. Perozzi, who were subsequently interned.[303] The golden first decade was well and truly over; and in fact, in another way, events had taken a downward turn a good deal earlier.

Over several previous years a major crisis had developed in the province among the Salesians themselves which, chronologically, paralleled the build-up to war in Europe and was in some respects linked to it. Its focal point was the character, personality and management style of the Provincial, Fr. Tozzi. As early

[298] SDB.GB.SH/I/4, House Chronicle, 29 Jan., 25 March, 9 Oct. 1939.

[299] *Ibid.*, 4-6 Jan. 1939.

[300] *Ibid.*, 21 May 1939.

[301] *Ibid.*, 15 Sept. 1939.

[302] *Ibid.*, 18 Aug. & 29 Dec. 1939; 21-23 Feb., 6-7 & 13 April, 19 & 29 May, 1 & 12 July 1940.

[303] *Ibid.*, 11 & 20 June 1940.

as 1934 the Provincial Visitor, Fr. Serie, an Italian, had reported of Tozzi candidly and critically:

> Too much of Mussolini, too little of Don Bosco and a dictatorial manner are all traits which do not inspire confidence. He does not easily listen to what the confreres have to say. Occasionally he manifests his antipathy for the Irish.[304]

This latter feature of Tozzi's attitudes perhaps stemmed from his suspicion of the revolutionary element in contemporary Irish nationalism. According to Fr. Serie, he suppressed the use of the Irish language in Salesian schools, occasionally spoke disrespectfully of Mr. de Valera, the President of Ireland, and much preferred the usage 'English province' (uniting, in his view, users of that language) to the 'Anglo-Irish province' adopted by the bulk of his confreres. The result was that, no doubt stimulated by the growing tension between Britain and Italy, particularly over the Abyssinian War, there had developed in the province an 'active and organised opposition', both to Tozzi and to the other leading Italian confreres, his close confidants, Franco and Simonetti.[305] Further complicated by a growing debate about the Spanish Civil War, the roots of this difficulty went back to the removal of Fr. Macey in favour of Don Scaloni in 1909; but they were undoubtedly deepened by Tozzi's very strict adherence to Salesian traditions and practices, a number of which in the view of his provincial subordinates were felt to be less than entirely relevant or appropriate; and also by his autocratic manner.

In particular, it would seem, the Provincial Council had been permitted to make only a perfunctory contribution to the management of the province's affairs. Throughout the 1930s, certainly, there were only six brief references in the minutes of its proceedings to developments at Shrigley, though those developments were substantial, consumed much capital, and created significant debts.[306] It is perhaps also pertinent that meetings of the House Chapter at Shrigley were very infrequent in Franco's time. After Tozzi had set the ball rolling on 1 January 1933, there were further meetings on 18 January and 9 December that year, and again on 31 May 1935; whereas, following Hall's appointment as Rector in August 1936, the Chapter met six times between then and the end of that calendar year.[307] Leaving aside matters of substance, there is little doubt that serious procedural issues existed.

[304] Quoted in DICKSON, *Dynamics of Growth*, p. 253.

[305] *Ibid.*

[306] SDB.GB. 'Minutes of the Provincial Council of the Anglo-Irish Province', 11 March 1931; 3 Sept. 1932; 7 Jan., 17 Oct. & 16 Dec. 1935; 22 Sept. 1937.

[307] SDB.GB.SH/I/11, 'Minutes of meetings of the House Chapter', 1 & 18 Jan. & 19 Dec. 1933; 31 May 1935; 7 Sept. 1936 and following.

The leader of the opposition to Fr. Tozzi was an Irishman, Fr. Richard McElligott. Born in Co. Kerry in 1889, he had come to England to join the Salesians in 1906 and had made his final profession in 1913. Between the autumn of that year and 1929, the year of Shrigley's opening, McElligott worked in South Africa and must have known Tozzi extremely well. By the mid-1930s he had risen to become Provincial Economer and was based at the Theologate and Agricultural Technical School at Blaisdon in Gloucestershire.[308] McElligott found that he could count on some 70 supporters from among English and Irish Salesians.[309] This, therefore, was not merely a vociferous complaint, but a very substantial revolt. Tozzi knew he was in serious difficulty and, in a letter of 22 April 1938 to Don Ricaldone, raised the possibility of his being relieved of his burden of office. In his reply the Rector Major studiously refrained from commenting on the matter.[310] Then on 29 April at a meeting of the Provincial Chapter Fr. McElligott was elected by a very substantial majority to be the province's delegate to the forthcoming General Chapter in Turin. Immediately after the vote Tozzi felt obliged to refer to Article 140 of the Congregation's Constitutions, where:

> canvassing for votes is expressly forbidden and against the spirit of the Rule. Rectors were strongly advised to make this point very clear on any future occasion.[311]

During the course of his subsequent attendance at the General Chapter McElligott sought out one of the most senior of the Rector Major's immediate subordinates, Don Candela, and laid his concerns before him, albeit with apparently little subsequent effect. Accordingly, on returning to England, he and his supporters formally petitioned Archbishop Godfrey, the newly-appointed Apostolic Delegate, requesting specifically that Tozzi be replaced as Provincial by someone 'of your own nationality'. The charge was not just Tozzi's generally autocratic style, but also serious irregularity in formal consultation processes, particularly in financial matters.[312] No wonder then, when he visited Shrigley in January 1939, that Tozzi informed his confreres that they all 'must work in the face of much criticism'.[313] Later in 1939, in an ameliorative circular letter to Rectors, Tozzi enclosed details of the provincial budget for the coming financial year.[314] It

[308] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Fr. Richard McElligott.

[309] DICKSON, *Dynamics of Growth*, p. 257.

[310] ASC, Tozzi, Battersea, to Don Ricaldone in Turin, 22 April 1938; with a draft reply of 29 April typed on the original.

[311] SDB.GB.PROV/CHAP/I11, 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Provincial Chapter', Battersea, 28-29 April 1938. McElligott received 21 votes; only 9 others were cast.

[312] DICKSON, *Dynamics of Growth*, pp. 254-259.

[313] SDB.GB.SH/I/4, House Chronicle, 17-19 Jan. 1939.

[314] SDB.GB.PROV/CIRC/II/12, Circular Letter from Tozzi to Rectors, 24 Oct. 1939.

was too little, too late, however, for Archbishop Godfrey had already conveyed his serious concerns to Don Ricaldone, who thereupon asked Don Candela to conduct a special visitation of the province. This took place between 21 November 1939 and 17 January 1940, an extraordinarily inauspicious time to be travelling anywhere in Europe.[315]

Candela conducted a hectic series of visits to most of the Houses in England and Ireland – he was at Shrigley for the four days 16-20 December 1939[316] – and then delivered two communications, one a report to his superiors in Turin, the other a letter to all his confreres in the Anglo-Irish Province. The former was frank and straightforward, acknowledging that for some time there had been a developing opinion that a non-Italian should be appointed as Provincial, and that it was now not only essential to do so, but inescapable. Many of the central criticisms of Tozzi were found to be soundly based and he had clearly forfeited a great deal of support.[317] The latter communication, which was written immediately before Candela's departure, and which was ordered to be read out to all confreres by their Rector and afterwards 'to be kept in the archives of the House', was a masterly document: calm; constructive; historical in approach, reminding them that in Fr. Macey the province had been among the very first in the Salesian world to have a non-Italian as Provincial; and yet with more than a hint of firmness running throughout. In particular Candela took exception to the manner in which criticism had been articulated as well as to the evidence of a continuing lack of discipline in many Houses, both of which he regarded as contrary to the Salesian spirit.[318] The backward link to the situation in which Fr. Macey had been replaced by Don Scaloni remained, at least in the opinion of those in Turin.

Don Ricaldone immediately replaced Tozzi with Fr. Frederick Couche, previously for many years Provincial Secretary. Shrigley was the last House which Tozzi visited on 28 January 1940, prior to sailing from Liverpool to New York, where he had been asked to discharge special duties on behalf of the Rector Major. By then many of his Italian confreres in England had been interned or deported, or had left for America, among them a number of greatly talented individuals, like Roffinella. Henceforward it would no longer be possible for Turin to appoint a non-native as the head of the Anglo-Irish province. It was thus the end of an era not just for Shrigley but for the province as a whole.

[315] DICKSON, *Dynamics of Growth*, p. 257.

[316] SDB.GB.SH/I/4, House Chronicle, 16-20 Dec. 1939.

[317] DICKSON, *Dynamics of Growth*, pp. 257-258.

[318] SDB.GB.PROV/CIRC/II/13, Letter from Don Candela, Battersea, 'to the Confreres of the Anglo-Irish Province', 17 Jan. 1940.

Chapter Fifteen
SEQUELS

The special duties allocated to Fr. Tozzi were no less than to be the Provincial of both the Salesian provinces in the United States, East and West. Moreover, some two years after he left Britain Don Ricaldone promoted him further, as his personal delegate, in an attempt to deal more effectively than had been possible hitherto with the exigencies of the War. Tozzi in effect became the Rector Major as far as no fewer than five provinces were concerned - those in the U.S.A., the two in Central America, and the Anglo-Irish province. Before too long he was also vested with responsibility for the Salesian effort in Australia. He became in fact the senior Salesian in the English-speaking world. Plenary powers, with the sole exception of appointments of Provincial, were delegated to him and so, once again, in so far as the war allowed, he had much to do with Britain and Ireland.[319] After the war he continued to be based in North America, eventually returning to Italy for a year's sabbatical in 1953-54. Left free to choose, he then decided to return to England for his twilight years and attended the celebration of Shrigley's 25th Anniversary in 1954. He lived at Melchett Court in Hampshire, a newly-opened Theologate, and it was there that he died in 1957 aged 82.[320]

Fr. Franco was not interned during the war, possibly because he held an American passport from the period before he came to Britain, but his movements were severely restricted. One of his chief wartime activities was the exercise of his ministry among Italian prisoners. He returned to the United States in 1947 at the request of Don Ricaldone, initially as Rector of the Salesian Institute of Theology in California, and he later served in the Salesian Houses at New Rochelle and Newton in the eastern United States. He came back home to Italy when his health finally began to fail, enjoying several final years among his confreres and family until his death in 1966 at the age of 81.[321]

Franco's great partner in the Shrigley adventure, Fr. Joseph Ciantar, spent the rest of his life on the other side of the world. He left Shrigley in October 1938 and at the request of his superiors in Turin took up responsibilities in Australia where, in characteristic fashion, he brought the Salesians there back from the brink of extinction; and then went on, under Tozzi's direction for a time, to play a key role in their subsequent renaissance. His obituarist pointed up a judgmental dilemma and resolved it immediately in Ciantar's favour:

[319] SDB.GB.PROV/CIRC/II/17, Letter from Don Ricaldone to the Salesians of Five Provinces, 31 Jan. 1942.

[320] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Fr. Aeneas Tozzi.

[321] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Fr. Angelo Franco.

> although it may seem strange at first glance to designate as the real founder of Salesian work in Australia one who did not come to the country until fourteen years after the work had begun, yet a fair-minded appraisal cannot deny him this honour.[322]

Ciantar visited Shrigley in 1958 when the College said its goodbyes to Fr. Michael Lindsay, on his way to take over as Novice-Master at Burwash from the extraordinarily long-serving Fr. Simonetti. Lindsay had been recruited from Dublin by Ciantar and, as a Shrigley boy, had presented the College's tribute to Ciantar on the eve of his departure for Australia in 1938.[323] Ciantar visited Shrigley for the last time in 1966.[324] He stayed in full harness in Australia right to the end, building a splendid school and a magnificent church, a national shrine to Don Bosco no less, at Engadine in South Australia, where he died in December 1968 aged 74.[325]

Fr. Adolfo Tornquist was also long-lived, spending the latter part of his Salesian career in his native Latin America, forever faithful to the missionary spirit engendered in him by the pioneer Cardinal Cagliero. In a postcard to Shrigley of 21 October 1968 he said that he was:

> glad to read that several past pupils of your College have gone to several missions. I hope you will not forget Latin America which is now very short of priests ... We Salesians have more vocations than others but we need ten times more! So I hope Shrigley will help generously. As for me I am not able to say more on account of my bad health. FIAT.[326]

He died in 1971 aged 83.[327]

As for the other individuals who have featured in this story, the musician, Fr. Roffinella, was taken to Canada for internment during the war, from where he maintained contact with Tozzi's successor, Fr. Couche. Later he joined the secular clergy in that country and was subsequently lost to sight.[328] The highly suc-

[322] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Fr. Joseph Ciantar.

[323] SDB.GB.SH/I/4, House Chronicle, 25 July, 9 Sept. & 24 Oct. 1938; PROV/NL/I/2, *News-Letter of the Anglo-Irish Province*, Vol. I, no. 2 (December 1958), p. 21. Before he finally left Ciantar paid a short visit to his family home in Malta and, typically, returned to Shrigley with three Maltese aspirants.

[324] This was during a trip which he made to the U.S.A., Britain and Malta to raise funds for his Australian endeavours.

[325] See Fr. Ted COOPER SDB, *Grateful Heirs: The Story of Salesian Presence in Australia 1927-1967* (Melbourne, 1999), *passim*. I am grateful to Fr. Mervyn Williams SDB for drawing my attention to this work, and to Fr. Anthony Moester SDB for generously providing me with a copy of it.

[326] SDB.GB.SH/III/58, Postcard to Fr. Rector [Fr. Michael Lindsay SDB], Shrigley, from Fr. Adolfo Tornquist SDB, Cara Salesiana, Alta Gracia, 21 Oct. 1968.

[327] DICKSON, *Dynamics of Growth*, p. 248.

[328] SDB.GB.SH/I/4, House Chronicle, 11 June 1940; SH/II/26-29, Correspondence between Frs. Couche & Roffinella, Nov. 1942 – April 1943; Oral testimony from Frs. P. Sherlock SDB & M. Williams SDB, Provincial House, Stockport.

cessful dramatist, Bro. Andrew Russell, went on to further such achievements at Burwash and Battersea; and following his ordination at Blaisdon in 1940, he served at Battersea, Bolton and finally, for over twenty-five years, at the Salesian school at Farnborough in Hampshire. He died aged 66 in 1973.[329] Fr. McElligott went on to successive senior positions in Salesian Houses in Ireland, notably Warrenstown and Pallaskenry, and in the summer of 1951 was granted the honour of representing the Holy See at an International Congress on Soil Science in Dublin. He died aged 91 in 1980 but not before, many years earlier, he had made his peace with his erstwhile antagonist.[330] In 1955, on his way back from a visit to South Africa, he had called at Melchet Court to find that Tozzi was in hospital in Southampton. He went there immediately to visit him. There is no record of what transpired between the two. However, in 1957, just before Tozzi's death, as another confrere was leaving Melchet Court for Ireland, he was instructed by Tozzi to 'bring my greetings to dear Fr. McElligott'.[331] Nurse Townshend's last recorded visit to Shrigley in the 1930s was for Ciantar's farewell in October 1938, when she arrived bearing gifts – a new set of football shirts for use in House matches.[332] She too attended Shrigley's Silver Jubilee celebrations in 1954.[333] She eventually died, still unmarried, at Hove in Sussex in March 1981. The existence in the Shrigley archive of the original certificate for the disposal of her cremated remains suggests that her last wish was that her ashes be scattered in the College grounds.[334] Bro. Reginald Wilkinson, who put such distinctive finishing touches to the Church at Shrigley, outlasted nearly everyone. He had left Shrigley for Battersea in 1943. Then from 1948 to 1966 he worked on various Salesian Missions in India and Africa before returning to Battersea for a long semi-retirement. He died in 1985 aged 83 after 57 years of life as a professed Salesian.[335]

By then Philip Tilden was long dead, though not before his career had undergone a renaissance. Other than by his own considerable energy and undoubted abilities, he was saved by the war-time demand for labour which intensified one of the main trends of the inter-war period, *viz.* the decline in the demand for domestic servants. Having done much of his earlier work in country houses, Tilden later specialised in adapting them for use without, or with very few, servants. Never again did he meet with the sparkling success which he had enjoyed in the 1920s but he was commissioned with growing frequency and won solid and profitable success. He maintained permanently close contact with Fr. Thomas Hall, at

[329] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Fr. Andrew Russell.

[330] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Fr. Richard McElligott.

[331] A Copsewoodian, *Copsewood* (Pallanskenry, 1994), p. 68.

[332] SDB.GB.SH/I/4, House Chronicle, 24 Oct. 1938.

[333] SDB.GB.SH/I/7, House Chronicle, 31 Oct. 1954.

[334] SDB.GB.SH/III/68, 'Certificate for the Disposal of Cremated Remains', Louie Elizabeth Townsend, 9 March 1981.

[335] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Bro. Reginald Wilkinson.

whose instigation he completed unexecuted designs for the Salesians at Cowley in 1945, and for Blaisdon in the following year.[336] Indeed, following a first stroke in 1952, Tilden spent several months recuperating at the Salesian House at Beckford in Gloucestershire, enjoying a great deal of Hall's company and continuing to grumble about the heating arrangements encountered in Salesian Houses.[337] His autobiography, which devoted an entire chapter to the Shrigley commission, was published in 1954, and he died in 1956 following a further stroke.[338]

By then Hall was Provincial, a post which he held with distinction for many years.[339] He spent his retirement in the Salesian House at Chertsey in Surrey; and was there in January 1987 when the Royal Institute of British Architects, of which Tilden had been elected a Fellow in 1929, mounted a retrospective exhibition – to which the Salesians were cordially invited – to mark the centenary of Tilden's birth.[340] The Chertsey Chronicle makes no mention of Hall having made one last visit to view his old friend's work. It is good to know that this is inconclusive. Thomas Hall died at Chertsey shortly afterwards on 8 April 1987.

Just over a year earlier the Salesians had left Shrigley. By the beginning of the final quarter of the twentieth century a dramatic fall in the number of those seeking to enter the religious life was evident throughout most of the developed world, not least in Britain. At Shrigley numbers declined steadily and there were particular difficulties in arranging adequate programmes of study for small quotas of sixth-form students. After considerable agonising the decision was taken to close the seminary. The last boys left in the summer of 1982 and the closure was formally announced to 'Past Pupils and Friends of Shrigley' in the following year.[341] A Salesian presence was maintained for some time thereafter. The entire Shrigley estate was sold on 10 January 1986 and the last Salesian, Fr. J. Docherty S.D.B., left on 20 January – but not before he had sent a final postcard, fittingly, to a confrere serving on the mission recently allocated to the British Province of the Salesians in Liberia, West Africa.[342] The original purchaser sold again and by the late 1980s the property was under development as the Hotel, Golf and Country Club which flourishes today.

[336] BETTLEY, *Lush and Luxurious*, pp. 20-28.

[337] Tilden Mss., Tilden to his wife, 8, 14 & 16 Feb. 1952; 6 & 14 Nov. 1952.

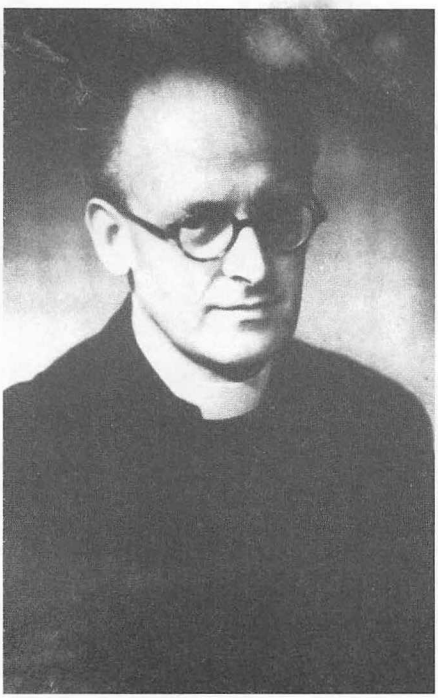
[338] TILDEN, *True Remembrances*, pp. 142-149. For an obituary of Tilden, see *The Times*, 9 March 1956.

[339] SDB.GB. Mortuary Letter for Fr. Thomas Hall.

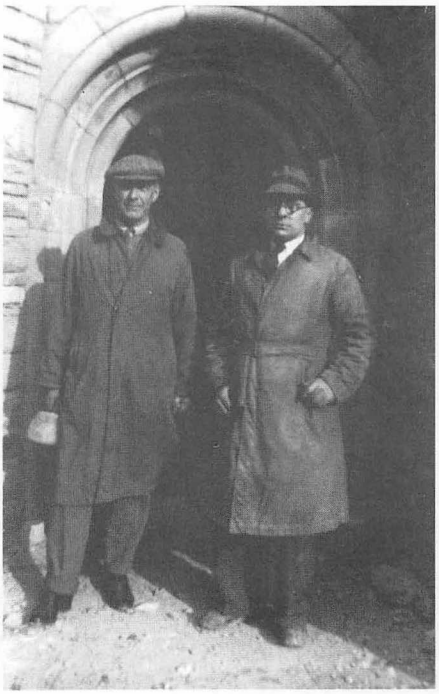
[340] BETTLEY, *Lush and Luxurious* was published by the R.I.B.A. to mark this centenary. See also J. BETTLEY, 'Lush and Luxurious', *The Architect* (Jan. 1986), pp. 28-29.

[341] SDB.GB.SH/III/73, Fr. C. Kennedy, S.D.B., Provincial to 'Past Pupils and Friends of Shrigley', no precise date but 1983.

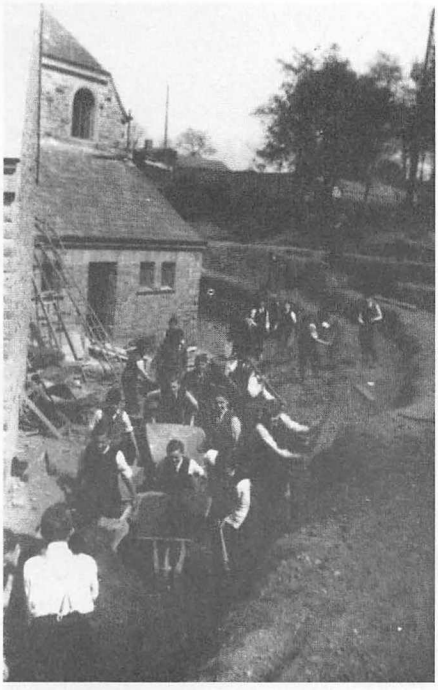
[342] SDB.GB.SH/III/78, Fr. J. Docherty, S.D.B., Shrigley, to Bro. D. MacDonald, S.D.B., Monrovia, Liberia, 19 Jan. 1986. For a brochure of the sale of the Hall and estate, see SDB.GB.SH/II/81, 1986.



11. Fr. Thomas Hall.



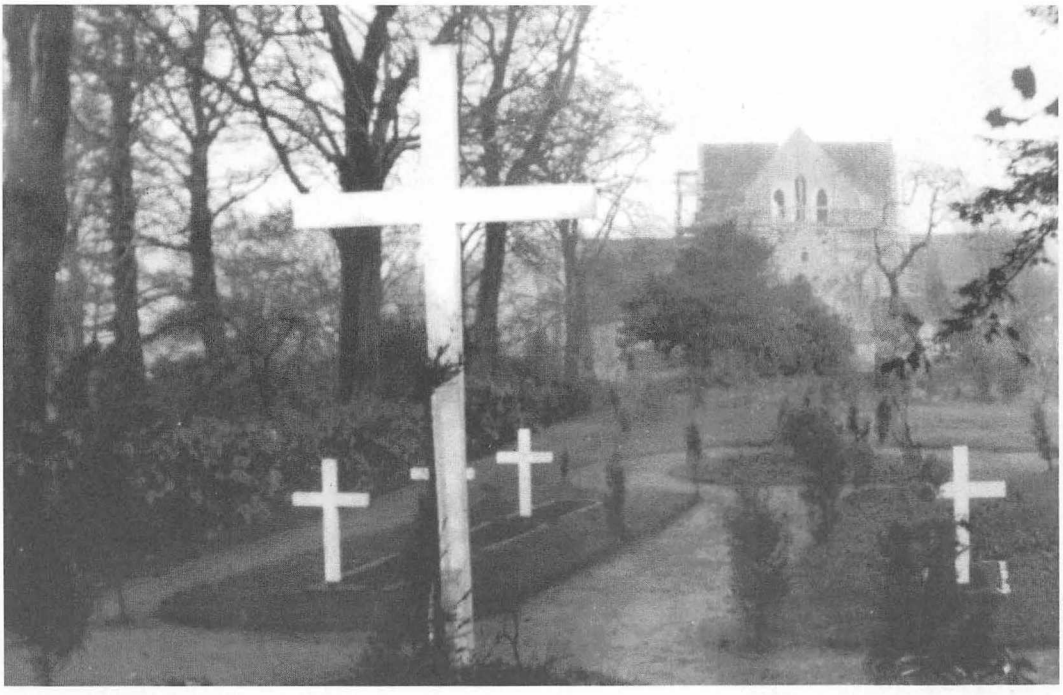
12. Tilden (left) in a Break from Sculpting.



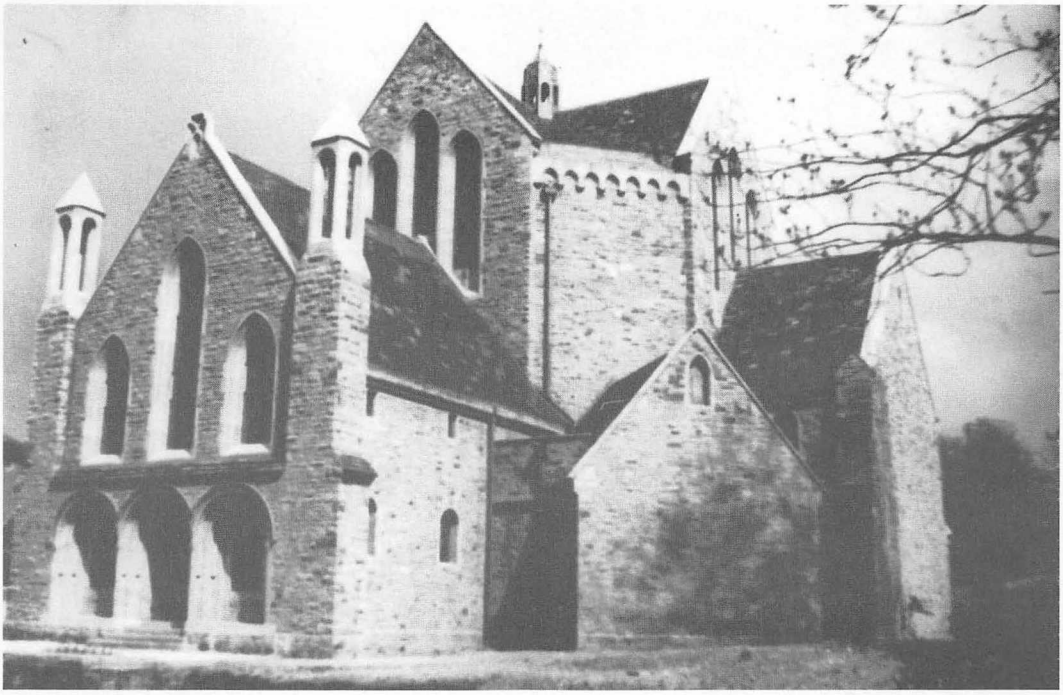
13. The Final Landscaping.

14. Tilden's Painting of Don Bosco
(with his Church in the background).

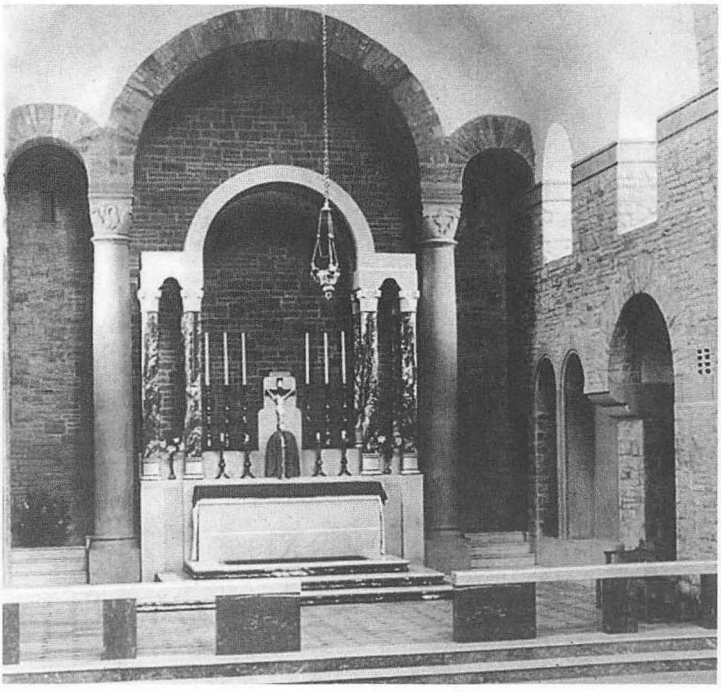
15. The Church in Winter, 1937-38.



16. View of the Church from the Cemetery, c. 1937.



17. The Completed Church.



18. The High Altar.

19. One of Tilden's Stations of the Cross.

20. Group Portrait, 24 July 1938, with (from left to righ) Ciantar, Tilden & the Lord Mayor of Dublin.

In March 1984, before the Salesians left, the Hall and 'Chapel' had been statutorily listed by Macclesfield Borough Council 'as buildings of special architectural and historic interest'.[343] Externally, therefore, the buildings look very much as they always did. Internally, however, the Church in particular has been profoundly altered with the introduction of a split-level. The ground floor is now a leisure facility with a rectangular swimming pool running the length of what used to be the nave; the extensive space above serves as a function room. The great bell outside has gone (to Farnborough Abbey) as have Tilden's painting of Don Bosco and his Stations of the Cross.[344] Yet Bro. Reginald's great front door remains, as do much of the carving and the excellent stonework throughout. The new owners can be commended on their sensitive treatment of a major transformation. Happily, the nearby cemetery is publicly signposted as 'Salesian' with free access permanently accorded to confreres and past pupils alike.

[343] SDB.GB.SH/VII/1, Macclesfield Borough Council to Fr. Rector, 23 March 1984.

[344] Tilden's painting is now held in the Salesian archive at Provincial House in Stockport, having previously been hung in a church administered by the Salesians in Edinburgh.

Chapter Sixteen
CONCLUSION

There is one feature of the plan to develop Shrigley about which there can be general agreement: the entire venture was an exceedingly ambitious one, the more so because it coincided with the Crash, the Slump and the ensuing Depression which brought acute economic distress to the Catholic working class upon whose support the Salesians in large measure depended. The very low cost of the initial acquisition of the property and the availability of Tornquist's capital were together indispensable. So too, however, was the espousal of the project by the Catholic laity. Their support was clearly latent, but it took the energy, imagination and skill of Fr. Joseph Ciantar to bring it forcefully into play. There were many important individual roles in the overall achievement: the evidence strongly suggests that the key, indispensable contribution was made by Ciantar. There was, however, another very significant element. The plan, so successfully implemented, to build a new Church and Shrine provided a major focal point which, following so many earlier projects, generated a momentum through to the outbreak of the Second World War.

A notable aspect of success was the cosmopolitan nature of the group responsible for it. Tozzi brought to the task the fruits of hard-won experience in South Africa. Franco, Ciantar and Hall, not to mention others, were all at a stage in their lives when, in various ways and no doubt for differing reasons, they were equipped and ready for a major undertaking. For Tilden the challenge was more fundamental: no less than the maintenance of his professional self-respect and, ultimately, his survival as an architect. Between them and their subordinates (who for their age also brought a great diversity of experience and ability to the project) they developed a chemistry which worked. It was an episode which demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that international organisations are apt to be at their best when able to pool international resources in pursuit of a common objective.

There were, of course, problems beyond those which arose out of contemporary economic difficulties. The first was a distinct lack of symmetry between the Salesian tradition emanating from Italy and that which developed in Britain and Ireland. The evidence is very clear on this point, although the overall impact of this difficulty should not be exaggerated. At home Italian Salesians were more secure in their religious affiliation, being members of a socially dominant culture, and once overseas they continued to be primarily motivated to educate boys from the lower social strata; and to seek to do so in a variety of ways in addition to conventional forms of schooling. Tozzi put a good deal of effort into attempts to diversify the province's portfolio in this respect. Although he succeeded in establishing the Agricultural Technical School at Blaisdon, and while the Agricultural Colleges at Pallaskenry and Warrenstown in Ireland were steadily consolidated,

there were also efforts, particularly in London, to set up clubs and hostels for potentially delinquent youths.[345] Sadly, none of these latter efforts were successful. For British and Irish Salesians, particularly the former who were members of a religious minority, the key endeavour remained to secure a successful position within the educational establishment. The Catholic laity saw educational success as their prime means of achieving economic advancement and social acceptance in an environment which was still suspicious of their religious beliefs. Local Salesians were acutely aware of this cast of mind and tailored their endeavours and objectives accordingly. They were uncomfortably aware of their lack of formal qualifications as teachers and were keen to be led to a resolution of this situation. While they were both loyal to Tozzi, Frs. Couche and Hall gave that lead.[346]

Other aspects of the relationship between the two groups were also less than optimal. In everyday matters such as external visits, the use of newspapers and radio, and smoking, the Italians were much stricter; other confreres were more relaxed about such matters although, perhaps correspondingly, they were keener on the observance of the constitutional arrangements under which the Congregation was canonically obliged to govern its affairs. These differences, which were essentially matters of temperament, approach, and culture, were seriously exacerbated by the national and international tensions of the inter-war period which culminated in the late 1930s; and which as far as the province was concerned revolved around two men. Ironically, in their determination to act on their convictions, Tozzi and McElligott had much in common: if they had been allowed their time over again, both might perhaps have acted somewhat differently.

The other issue which Salesians and many others debated vigorously for much of the twentieth century was the one which lay behind the development of Shrigley itself. What was the best way of nurturing vocations to the priesthood and the religious life? One could establish junior seminaries and seek to interest and engage individuals at an early stage. Or, particularly if one already possessed a network of secondary schools, one could adopt a longer-term strategy, allowing young men to arrive at a settled conviction beyond adolescence. By endorsing the former approach at Shrigley the Salesians had it both ways because they continued to attract vocations from their other schools. However, this did not stifle the debate. Particularly at a time of severe economic depression, some incumbents of well-established Salesian educational institutions inevitably speculated as to how their circumstances

[345] See for example *S.B.*, Vol. XXIV, no. 4 (July-Aug. 1932), p. 116; Vol. XXVI, no. 4 (April-May 1934), p. 137; Vol. XXVII, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1935), p. 182; Vol. XXVIII, no. 2 (March-April 1936), pp. 61-62; Vol. XXIX, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1937), p. 3.

[346] This matter was a major theme in Fr. Couche's Records of his Visitations as Provincial (SDB.GB.PROV/VIS/I-IV, 1941-50). It remained so during Fr. Hall's Provincialship (see PROV/CHAP/II/12, 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Provincial Chapter', Battersea, 24-25 April 1952 and PROV/NL/I/1, *News-Letter of the Anglo-Irish Province*, Vol. I, no. 1 (July 1958), p. 2).

might have been improved if it had not been necessary to contribute to the cost of developing Shrigley. Such feelings are likely to have been aggravated rather than allayed by the general lack of communication and the dearth of specific budgetary details. The autocratic Tozzi chose to keep sensitive matters to himself and his few confidants. In this respect he clearly went too far but, questions of temperament aside, one can see why he was inclined to do so. Nor did this issue fade away with the change of regime. Indeed, as the decades passed, it became ever more pressing.

Yet when we return to our primary focus the raw dynamism of this first decade at Shrigley must be acknowledged. The records are alive with evidence of a pioneering determination to succeed, and of the strength of the collective endeavour which this engendered. Both the community and the boys were largely insulated from the ebb and flow of events and opinion beyond the confines of the estate; this enabled them to concentrate on ensuring that their particular objectives were achieved. As an outsider, Tilden was struck so forcibly by this that he claimed to have been marked for ever. According to the testimony which he published towards the end of his days, 'never in my life have I experienced such warmth of spirit as at Shrigley'.[347]

[347] TILDEN, *True Remembrances*, p. 144.

APPENDIX
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Numbers in the Community at Shrigley, 1930-39

Date	Superiors	Priests	Clerics	Lay Brothers	Theologians	Total
1930	2	1	3	3	-	9
1931	3	2	4	3	-	12
1932	3	2	6	6	-	17
1933	6	2	7	6	6	27
1934	7	2	5	8	11	33
1935	7	3	3	11	18	42
1936	7	2	5	9	20	43
1937	6	-	6	5	-	17
1938	6	-	7	6	-	19
1939	5	2	7	6	-	20

Source: *Elenchi Generali della Società di S. Francesco di Sales* (Turin, 1930-39). Given the difficulty of collecting them worldwide, these details are valid for the year before that stated, *i.e.* for 1930 read 1929. Because for several of these years there were over 160 pupils at Shrigley, it is clear that the entire complement of the College reached and occasionally exceeded 200 in number.

Note on Sources

1. Manuscripts

i The bulk of the material on which this book is based has been drawn from the archives of the British Province (prior to 1972 the Anglo-Irish Province) of the Salesians, which are held at the Provincial House, Wellington Road North, Stockport (SDB.GB). These archives contain very many documents which either in whole or in part relate to Shrigley. Of most value, however, are those contained in the section (SH) specifically devoted to Shrigley, the majority of which were generated there and are solely concerned with aspects of its development.

Material has also been drawn from other sections, as follows:

PROV/VIS The records of the Visitations of the Houses of the Anglo-Irish Province by Fr. F. Couche, Provincial 1940-52.

PROV/CHAP The records of the meetings of the Provincial Chapters, and associated papers.

PROV/CIRC Circular Letters and associated papers from Turin to Battersea, and from Battersea to the rest of the province.

PROV/NL *News-Letters of the Anglo-Irish Province.*

PROV/AINS The records of Fr. W. Ainsworth, Provincial Secretary 1943-52.

The archives in Stockport also hold a comprehensive set of Mortuary Letters (obituaries) of members of the Anglo-Irish (later British) Province.

ii There is also significant material in the Salesian Central Archives (ASC) at Via della Pisana in Rome. Particularly useful in the file dealing with the period from 1930 onwards is the correspondence from Fr. Tozzi, the Provincial, to various of his Superiors

(including the Rector Major) in Turin. Some of these originals are endorsed with drafts of replies, especially valuable when neither side of the correspondence exists in the archives at Provincial House in Stockport.

iii A Tilden archive is held in the British Architecture Library at the Royal Institute of British Architects at Portland Place in London. The bulk of the material here consists of manuscript copies of the many novels by Tilden which remained unpublished. However, there is an important series of letters to his wife, relevant particularly to the 1930s and the early 1950s; and an Account Book which details the contracts relating to the Church at Shrigley.

iv The Shrewsbury Diocesan archives, held at St. Joseph's Primary School in Birkenhead, hold drafts of correspondence from Bishop Singleton to Fr. Tozzi (the formal versions of which are held at SDB.GB.SH at Stockport). There is also correspondence between Fr. Franco and Bishop Moriarty in regard to the reception into the Church of Dr. and Mrs. Pennington.

v Two important typescripts are in the possession of Mr. M. Kilduff, Archivist of the Shrigley Old Boys' Association, Chorltonville, Manchester. These are: Anon, 'Shrigley 1929-43: Its Foundation, Growth Considered Year by Year, Events of Note, Activities', and J. Murray, 'Personal Memoir of Shrigley, 1935-40, 1941-43'.

2. *Printed Primary Sources*

Elenco Generale della Società di S. Francesco di Sales Turin, 1930-39 – these are annual lists of the staff based in the various Salesian Houses. Provincial House at Stockport has a full set.

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Salesian Bulletin – this publication, which was, and remains, the chief means of communication between the Salesians and their benefactors and co-operators, appeared several times a year in the 1920s and 1930s. It was published in Italy but written in English, and a complete bound set is held at Provincial House in Stockport.

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This book deals with the foundation by the Salesian Congregation in 1929 of a junior seminary for boys at Shrigley Park, near Macclesfield in Cheshire, and with its development in the decade before the Second World War. The College recruited widely throughout Britain and Ireland and Shrigley Hall, already a large and imposing property, was substantially re-modelled and extended. The single most challenging project was the building of a magnificent church, designed and overseen by Philip Tilden, among the most successful British architects of his day. This particular achievement was among the more striking elements in the development of an isolated and highly unusual way of life at Shrigley: a way of life which left a permanent mark on Tilden, who was a periodic visitor; which, there and nearly everywhere, is now defunct, but which, thanks to unusually rich archives, is re-created here.

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