

The Anglo-Irish Province of the Salesians of Don Bosco lost one of its most revered members, and indeed its oldest, by the death, on New Year's day 1960, of the

REV. FATHER ALOYSIUS HAWARDEN, SDB.

He was, at the time of his death, 86 years of age, having been born at Cheltenham and baptised in the Benedictine church there in 1873. He came of a strong Lancashire family which gave two priests to the church, his elder brother, the late Fr. Felix. C. P. and himself.

Fr. Hawarden came to Battersea in the very early days of the Salesian work there – the Salesians having arrived in England only in November 1887. It was the 20th November 1891, just four years later, when the new recruit arrived. He made his novitiate at Battersea from 1892–3 and received the religious habit from Very Rev. Fr. C. Macey, who, as is well known, had been sent by St. John Bosco to commence the Salesian work in this country. Fr. Hawarden was perpetually professed on the 20th October 1893 and it is interesting to recall that the priest who presided at the ceremony was none other than the Servant of God, Fr. Michael Rua, Don Bosco's first successor. Present too was that other famous early Salesian, the Catechist General, Fr. Barberis.

The final honour of the Sacred Priesthood was conferred upon Aloysius by Bishop Bourne at Southwark on July 18th 1897. God granted him long years and the grace of celebrating his Diamond Jubilee in the priesthood at Chertsey in 1957.

Fr. Hawarden became the first headmaster of the Salesian School at Battersea and he stayed in that post until February 1903 when he was asked to start a new mission at Wandsworth (East Hill). For a time he continued to reside at Battersea but, in October of the same year, he was appointed the first Rector of the Salesian Community at East Hill. The school there continued until about 1923, when it closed owing to the lack of facilities for development. The boys were transferred to the school at Battersea and the parish was handed over to the diocese. In connection with his duties at East Hill, Fr. Hawarden also undertook the chaplaincy to Wandsworth prison. It was his grim task to be present at many executions. He retained this prison appointment for several years even after his return to Battersea in 1908.

On the death of Fr. William Kelly in November 1918, he took charge of the parish of the Sacred Heart, Battersea for a year or so, then in 1922 he moved to Farnborough, Hants as the parish priest and he remained in that office until 1925 when he was appointed parish priest at Chertsey, a post which he continued to hold until the first signs of failing health began to show themselves in 1941. It was during his term of office at Chertsey that the beautiful church of St. Anne was built.

If there was one thing of which Fr. Hawarden was fond more than anything else, it was music. In the old days at Battersea, he had numbered among his associates and friends such people as Leslie Stuart, composer of "Soldiers of the Queen" etc., who gave recitals in the Sacred Heart church at Battersea and whom Fr. Hawarden had known from Manchester connections, and Alphonse Cary, the organist at Battersea. As Parish Priest he found ample scope for encouraging musical development and he was an enthusiast with choirs. But it was for the poor souls whom he had known in his prison chaplaincy days that he gave of his best in the realm of music. He founded, whilst still prison chaplain, the first choir for prison visiting and he went, in later years from one prison to another with his choir giving concerts and helping to cheer the lives of those in sorrow.

His personal piety was a by-word. Prayer was his life. His devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to Our Lady was intense and fervent. In the long years when his health was failing and he lost an eye and a leg, it was his courage and piety that sustained him. He was a humble man and he never asked for special care. On his Diamond Jubilee day when he was almost carried into church for the Solemn High Mass, he would not go to the place of honour which had been prepared for him on the sanctuary. Instead he slipped quietly into the confessional, where he could remain quiet and unseen.

It was from the Nursing Home of Our Lady of Consolation at Southwark, next door to the Cathedral where he had been ordained that he eventually went to his eternal reward. The body was taken to Chertsey for the Solemn Dirge in the church of St. Anne on the 4th January, and there, the next day, Solemn Requiem Mass was sung by Very Rev. Fr. W. Walsh, the Rector of Chertsey. Father Provincial preached the panegyric and officiated at the graveside. The interment was in the nearby cemetery, close to the graves of Fr. Poggio and Fr. A. Murphy.

By the courtesy and kind invitation of Fr. E. Mitchison, P. P. Solemn Requiem Mass was also sung by Very Rev. Fr. F. McCabe. SDB, Rector of Battersea, in the church of St. Mary Magdalen, East Hill, Wandsworth, on Monday evening, January 4th.

May he rest in peace.