

## Denis Canon O'Connell



Fr. Denis O'Connell was born in Coolatour which is in Milford, County Cork on 15th Feb 1918. He entered St Patrick's College Thurles at the age of 17 on the 5th September 1935 where was trained for the priesthood. He received tonsure and minor orders in June 1939. He received subdiaconate and diaconate in June and September of 1940. He was eventually ordained Priest on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1941 by the Most Reverend Dr. Jeremiah Kinane, Bishop of Waterford & Lismore, specifically for missionary work in the Diocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh. Fr. O'Connell then spent all of his life as a priest in Scotland.

His first appointment was at St Machan's Lennoxton where he was to serve as assistant Priest to Fr. Wheelan from 1941 till 1949. During this time Fr O'Connell's life-long love of athletics was to come to the fore as he organized Community Games. During his early years in Scotland he was alarmed by the sectarian divide between Catholic and Protestant in West of Scotland society perpetuated through other sports, most notably football, and set about using athletics as a means to bring the different religious communities together. He instigated a series of Community

Games where Athletes from all backgrounds could compete freely together.

From 1949 to 1950 Fr O'Connell was to serve at St Agatha's Methil in Fife as an assistant Priest and then subsequently at St Columba's Edinburgh from 1950 to 1954 again as an assistant Priest. Fr. O'Connell then spent some time teaching at St Mary's College Blair's, the Scottish Junior Seminary in Aberdeen from 1954 to 1957. It was about this time that he was deemed ready to become, in effect, a Parish Priest when he was appointed as Administrator of St Margaret Mary's Edinburgh for 3 years until 1960.

His next appointment was to change his life in many ways as he was then seconded to St Gabriel's Media Centre at Hatchend in Middlesex for almost 2 whole years where he was to work as a consultant on Catholic & Religious broadcasting making many radio and TV appearances whilst working for Fr. Angelus Andrew (subsequently Bishop Agnelus Andrew) who was Head of Religious Affairs at that time. This posting would give him access to many famous personalities which considerably influenced his ability to organize public events in subsequent years!

Back in Scotland, his first appointment as Parish Priest proper was at Our Lady's, Stoneyburn in West Lothian where he was to serve for 4 years from 1961 to 1965. Fr. O'Connell was then appointed Vice Postulator of the Cause for the Beatification of the Blessed Margaret Sinclair taking over this post from Monsignor McQuillan in 1964.

At his next Parish, St Matthew's Rosewell in Midlothian where he served from 1965 to 1972, he founded the National Centre for the Cause of the Beatification of Margaret Sinclair. From this time onwards and in all the Parishes in which he subsequently served, Fr O'Connell organised many annual Pilgrimages to St Matthew's Rosewell as well as to Mount Vernon Cemetery in Edinburgh where the remains of Margaret Sinclair had been buried for 76 years. More recently in 2003 her remains were moved to their current location, in the shrine at St. Patrick's, Cowgate in Edinburgh. The pinnacle of his

time in this post as Vice Postulator came in February 1978 when the Cause for the Congregation of the Saints in Rome petitioned His Holiness Pope Paul VI who recognised Margaret Sinclair's case and raised her status from 'Blessed' Margaret Sinclair to that of the 'Venerable' Margaret Sinclair.



The Most Reverend Doctor Jeremiah Kinane, Bishop of Waterford & Lismore who ordained Canon O'Connell



Venerable Margaret Sinclair



Tomb of Venerable Margaret Sinclair at St Patrick's Cowgate Edinburgh

Fr O'Connell then came here to St Patrick's Kilsyth in 1972 arriving on the same day as his new assistant Priest, Fr. Keith Patrick O'Brien, now His Eminence Keith Patrick Cardinal O'Brien.

### CHANGES AT ST PATRICK'S

Two new priests have been welcomed by Kilsyth St. Patrick's congregation, following the retirement of Canon Thomas McGarvey and the transfer of Father Michael Bell to Blacfield. Father Denis O'Connell is the new parish priest and Father Keith O'Brien his assistant.

Father O'Connell's appointment revives an old link between his family and Kilsyth. His cousin, Father Dan Murphy, was assistant priest to the late Canon McNamara from 1915 to 1923.

A former member of the staff at St. Mary's College, Blair, Father O'Connell is known for his broadcasts on radio and TV and served for some years as assistant to Father Agnelus Andrew, O.F.M., Deputy Head of Religious Broadcasting, BBC, London.

More recently he was parish priest at St. Matthew's, Roswell, where he became known throughout Scotland and overseas for his work in helping out at the church regularly to enable the two priests to have time off.

Canon McGarvey (75, now lives at 8 Manse Court). A native of Breubach, he has been in the priesthood for 45 years, serving in Edinburgh, Polmont, Lochure (14th) and Bonnybridge before coming to Kilsyth.

The canon says he has enjoyed his work in Kilsyth immensely, and has seen many changes for the better, particularly the new housing schemes. The highlight of his 16 years was without doubt the opening of the new church in 1965.

Canon McGarvey has taken advantage of the Pope's new ruling that the clergy can retire at 75. "I feel it is for the good of the parish," he said. "I am stepping down to enable two younger, more active men to take over."

Father O'Brien studied for the priesthood at St. Andrew's College, Drybridge, after graduating at Edinburgh University.

After further studies at Edinburgh University and on completion of his teacher training course at Mary House College of Education, Father O'Brien served as chaplain to St. Columba's School, Dunfermline, and assistant priest at St. Jude's Church, Cowdenbeath. He is a native of Ballycastle, Co. Antrim.

#### WONDERFUL CHURCH

Speaking at 8 Manse last Sunday, Father O'Connell congratulated the parishioners on their wonderful new church. "The fact that it is almost clear of debt," he said, "is a memorial to the outstanding achievements of Canon McGarvey as parish priest; an eloquent tribute also to the loyalty and exceptional generosity of the good parishioners of St. Patrick's down through the years. Father O'Brien and myself are delighted that Canon McGarvey is staying with us at Kilsyth to keep a kindly, fatherly eye over the parish and people he so obviously loves."

#### STAYING IN KILSYTH

Canon McGarvey's, retreat took place 16 years to the day after his arrival in Kilsyth in 1956. He has decided to remain in the town, however, so his well-kept figure will still be much in evidence. He will be



**FATHER DENIS O'CONNELL**



**FATHER KEITH O'BRIEN**

### Kilsyth Chronicle 1972

In the picture below, we can see Fr O'Connell visiting his retired predecessor as Parish Priest of Kilsyth, Thomas Canon McGarvey at his retirement house in Johnston Avenue in Kilsyth.



Fr. O'Connell, Canon McGarvey and Fr. Portelli c1982.

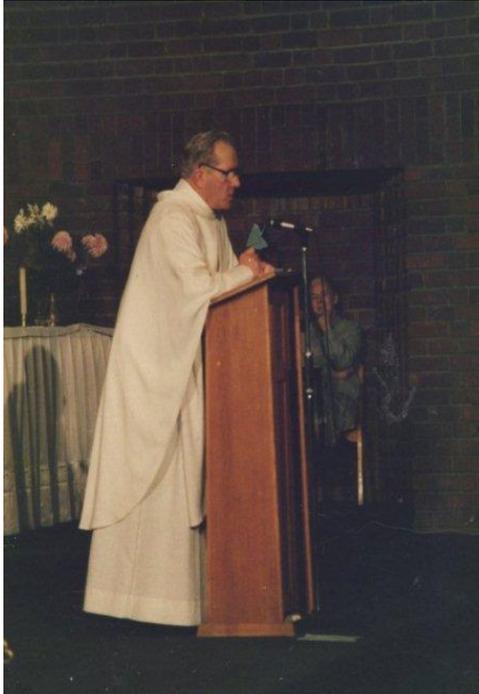
Fr. O'Connell was elevated to the Cathedral Chapter by the then Archbishop O'Brien on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Dec 1986 whilst still serving at St Patrick's Kilsyth.



Canon O'Connell with the then Archbishop O'Brien

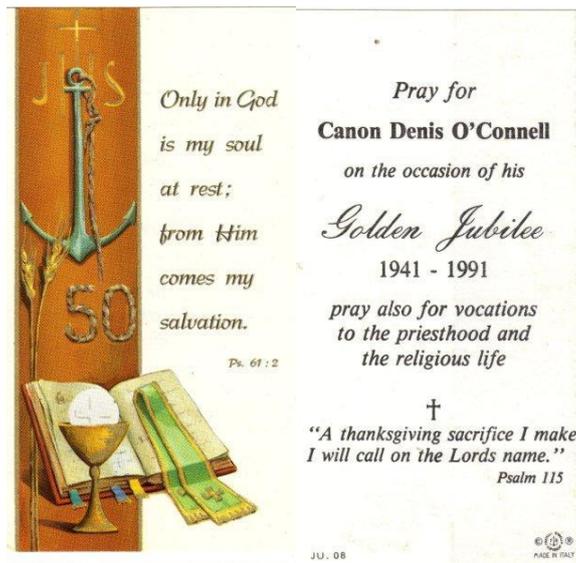


Left photo Canon O'Connell with his nieces on the left of picture and Archbishop O'Brien, George MacDonald and Catriona Canavan, St Patrick's Housekeeper on the right of picture. Right photo members of the Cathedral Chapter of Canon's created December 1986.



Canon O'Connell left preaches at his thanksgiving Mass in Kilsyth after joining the Cathedral Chapter. RHS. The Rev. Alistair McLachlan of the Burns and Old Parish Church, Kilsyth addresses the Parishioners of St Patrick's in the Church hall after Mass.

In 1988 Fr O'Connell undertook his final mission to the people and the Parish of St Mary's, Leslie in Fife where he was to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of his Ordination to the Priesthood.



Canon O'Connell' Golden Jubilee Prayer Card

After a period of ill health and a battle with cancer, Canon O'Connell died on the 9th October 1997. After a requiem Mass with his parishioners at St Mary's Leslie on the 13th October 1997 his body was taken to St Mary's Cathedral Edinburgh on the 14th October 1997 where Archbishop O'Brien was the principle concelebrant at a requiem Mass and

officiated at the graveside for his subsequent interment, appropriately in Mount Vernon Cemetery Edinburgh, close to the spot where Margaret Sinclair was at that time buried.



Fr Denis O'Connell's grave near the chapel at the heart of Mount Vernon Cemetery Edinburgh.

 <p>DENIS CANON O'CONNELL 15th February 1918 - 9th October 1997</p> <p><i>In fond love with faith and hope we pray</i></p>	<hr/> <p><i>May He support us all the day long while the shades lengthen and the evening comes and the busy world is hushed and the fever of life is over and our work is done.</i></p> <p><i>Then in His mercy may He give us a safe lodging and a holy rest and peace at last.</i></p> <p><i>John Henry Newman</i></p> <hr/>
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In Remembrance - Canon O'Connell's Prayer Card

**Very Rev, Denis Canon O'Connell – 9th October 1997.**

*Canon Denis O'Connell, retired parish priest of St Mary's Leslie, Glenrothes, died on the 9th Oct 1997, aged 79. At his funeral Mass in St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh on the 14th October the following homily was delivered by the Most Reverend Keith Patrick O'Brien Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh.*

“It has rightly been said that the real measure of a man is shown as he prepares for retirement and then for death. We are told that the late Pope, John XXIII, calmly gave instructions about his own last hours on earth. His biographer writes, *“If the phrase were not open to misunderstanding, one could say that he stage-managed his own death.”* The instructions were found in the ritual: ‘*Ceremonial for Bishops.*’ The late Pope simply said: *“Help me to die as a Bishop or a priest should”*.”

That was also the final wish of the late Canon O'Connell: *“Help me to die as a priest should”*.

Retirement is never an easy thing to face for an active priest – and if ever there was an active priest it was the late Canon Denis. Having served in a great variety of parishes in our Archdiocese as well as spiritual Director of St Mary's College, Blairs and St Gabriel's Media Centre in Middlesex, the Canon realised that the years passed and as he reached the age of 75 he should indeed think of his retirement. Following on his ministry in St Mary's he wrote to his parishioners on the 26th August 1992 stating: *“After more than fifty years in priestly ministry and with the age for retiral suggested by Canon Law looming over the horizon, the time has come for me to make plans for the future. September looks the most suitable time”*. And he went on to add that although he did indeed look forward to having more time to spend with his sister Mary and his family at home in County Cork where accommodation would be provided, he would not take kindly to being completely cut off from his brother priests, from the many good friends in his parish and in other parishes where he had served, as well as good friends in other churches and in various walks of life whose support and friendship he had enjoyed over the years. Consequently he indicated that he was extremely fortunate to be moving to a home in Edinburgh – one of three self-contained flats in what he described as idyllic surroundings at Ravelston House, Ravelston Dykes, Edinburgh.

But the pastoral priest to the very end he concluded that his letter with a parting message adapted from the message of Pope John Paul II leaving Ireland after his pastoral visit and wrote:

*“As I leave your hospitable parish which is so dear to my heart may I express a wish that every home remain, or begin again to be a home of daily family prayer”*.

And the Canon added that children will love to lead these prayers specially arranged with young families in mind and encouraged his parishioners to try these prayers a few evening after tea to see how easy it was!

I visited the Canon in St Andrews's just a day before he was to visit the Western General hospital for further tests because of the increased pain he was suffering. When I visited him following on the results of the tests he gave me the doctors letter to read and indicated that he might not have too long in this life. He asked me, as his former altar boy from St Columba's and his former curate from St Patrick's Kilsyth, to say some words at the Homily of his requiem Mass – and then he wrote to me the next day indicating the time of his letter – 5am!

The letter read:

*“My very sincere thanks to you for your company and your time last night. Bless you! And thanks indeed also for so generously accepting my suggestion that my former altar boy and curate would himself say some few words at my requiem. Bridget (my housekeeper) will get from Father Matt Donoghue a wonderful video of a sermon he preached in Kilsyth when I was installed as a Canon. This might help! I suggested to Father Paul Capaldi that he might get in touch with the Colomban Singers, our friends, to support the singing – you know how I was a great authority on choirs!”.*

And the Canon Concluded by writing:

*“With renewed thanks for your kindness and close friendship over the years and if I ever get to heaven I’ll get the Venerable Margaret and all the friends to keep you always I their prayers. God love you. Denis.”*

And there was a final PS!

*“Father Paul Capaldi has my suggested hymns and my suggested readings for requiem etc.”.*

If Pope John XXIII calmly gave instructions about his last hours – so too did Canon Denis and I am sure those final words of Pope John XXIII could be applied to Canon Denis as he simply asked help to die as a Christian and as a priest should!

As so many of you know, Canon Denis was a native of Buttiven in County Cork and his training for the priesthood took place at St Patrick’s College, Thurles. He was ordained to the priesthood on the 5th June 1941 and as I have indicated fulfilled a variety of ministries in our Archdiocese having served in Lennoxton, Methil, St Columba’s Edinburgh, St Margaret Mary’s Edinburgh, Stoneyburn, Rosewell, Kilsyth and Leslie.

I mention these general ministries of the Canon but I would like to single out three of three particular ministries as we think of him and pray for the happy repose of his soul at this funeral Mass.

**a) A love of the priesthood – and an encouragement of others to follow in his footsteps.**

One might say that if Canon Denis has any special love it was of that priesthood of Jesus Christ into which he had been ordained. He loved his priesthood and he lived that priesthood, as he lived his whole life, to the full.

He wanted to share his priesthood and he rejoiced at the way in which he was so often able to come into contact young men in his various ministries encouraging them along the road that leads to the priesthood.

His first appointment was to St Machan’s in Lennoxton and it was the Parish priest there, Father Whelan, to look after the clubs. He indicated that it would not be very difficult simply to take devotions every second Sunday. However, Denis had different ideas and soon there was a thriving athletics club for the town with famous athletes coming to Lennoxton from all parts of Scotland, from Ireland and indeed from further afield.

His love of sport and his high regard for young people continued when he was appointed as Spiritual Director of the junior seminary at Blairs in Aberdeen. Spiritual input was imparted from Canon Denis but there was also a tremendous amount of knowledge about athletics and all sports handed on by the enthusiastic young priest. A combination of spiritual input and enthusiasm for

life in general continued to be imparted by Canon Denis throughout his life.

One must wonder just how many young men were led by the example of Canon Denis from his love of sports to love God and to love the priesthood as they tried to imitate the Canon in every way.

**b) The use of the media.**

Canon Denis was one of those priests who early in his priesthood saw the great use to which the media could be put. This he did at a parish level and he often recounted to me the many hours we spent churning the handle of old Gestetners in the parishes in which he served.

I myself am aware of that great apostolate of Canon Denis from my time with him in St Patrick's Kilsyth, when regular Parish newsletters contained a wealth of information; when regular letters to the sick were produced; and when Denis used every means at his disposal to bring news of the church to the attention of the general public.

Shortly after my arrival in Kilsyth on the same day as Canon Denis, Eric the mynah bird was placed outside the parish house on the small patch of lawn. It was not long before a large group of passers-by were gathered around Eric speaking to him and encouraging him to speak to them. As the crowd increased there on the horizon, 'Scoop', the reporter from the local Kilsyth Chronicle. It didn't take Denis long to have a press release of Eric's sayings ready for the local press along with his full curriculum vitae!

His ability to communicate to people and to get on with all kinds of people in the media was recognised by the late Bishop Angellus Andrew and Canon Denis worked with him at St Gabriel's Media centre in Middlesex both learning from Bishop Agnellus and imparting something of his own zeal, enthusiasm and knowledge.

**c) The Canon was Vice Postulator for the beatification of the Venerable Margaret Sinclair.**

It was as Vice Postulator for the beatification and Canonisation of the Venerable Margaret Sinclair that Denis' name became known to a much wider circle of people in Both Scotland and indeed further afield.

The possible beatification and canonisation of this Edinburgh-born working girl was something that he desired greatly – and he encouraged tremendous pilgrimages to Rosewell when he was parish priest there and latterly to Mount Vernon Cemetery and St Patrick's Church Edinburgh where Margaret was baptised and received all of the Sacraments of Initiation.

Denis would use every means to bring knowledge of the cause of the Venerable Margaret to the attention of the people of Scotland using the media in every way possible. Throughout Scotland and in many parts of the English-speaking world the Canon became known for single minded commitment to the cause for the canonisation of the Venerable Margaret. This commitment reached its penultimate stage when on the 6th February 1978 Pope Paul VI solemnly decreed that the servant of God, Margaret Sinclair, had in fact practised to a heroic degree the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity and also the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice fortitude and temperance with other related virtues.

Denis continued as Vice Postulator of the cause until ill-health and his increasing commitments elsewhere led him to resign – but his interest in the cause continued right up until his death.

Shortly before his death, the Canon wrote a short letter of thanks to the many friends of Margaret Sinclair pilgrimages ending with the words: “*Now let us place all our prayers in God’s hands – for God is good; and God knows best*”.

Canon Denis during the 56 years of his priestly life touched the lives of very many people. I think it is true to say that he did not really want to die - he loved life too much.

But in his last illness he acquired that peace and tranquillity which comes to so many people as they approach death. He realised that his life’s work was over - that he had fought the good fight – that he had accomplished all that the good Lord had asked him to do and he was now ready to return to that Lord who had given him life and who had called him to the priesthood.

On this occasion I do express the sympathy of all in our Archdiocese for the family and friends of the Canon.

Two sisters and two brothers of the Canon are still alive in Ireland: Mary and Kitty, Matt and Paddy and there are many nephews and nieces and other relations who are here with us at this time.

I thank very many people – particularly Mrs Bridget Doherty for her continued and dedicated care and devotion to the Canon especially in his last years and in the recent months of his critical illness.

Along with the Canon’s family, I am most appreciative of the ongoing care of the Canon’s doctor – Dr Pope and of all involved in his treatment in the Western General Hospital and ongoing care provided by nursing staff.

I also thank all of those in all of the parishes where the Canon had served for their many contacts with him in recent months, as also Canon Lawrence, Canon Peter and Father Ken, who have been companions in St Andrew’s Ravelston. I express my deep sympathy also with all of those people who loved Denis during his life on earth, especially the very many people involved as Friends of the Venerable Margaret Sinclair.

May we learn something of his own appreciation of life and be determined to expend all our energies in the service of the Lord and his people as best we can. May God grant him eternal rest as he awaits the final resurrection in the company of the Venerable Margaret Sinclair and all his family and friends.”

***By kind permission of The Scottish Catholic Directory, 1998 edition, pages 503 – 507.***

## Some Memories of Canon O'Connell

From good Irish farming stock Fr. O'Connell, was always fond of all animals. Over the years he kept pet birds, dogs and was also a noted horseman. Once on a visit to Peebles to say Mass as relief for the local Priest he was asked to take part in the common riding. The photo of him that day subsequently made the front page of the Scottish Catholic Observer.



Fr O'Connell - a good horseman at the Common Riding in Peebles.

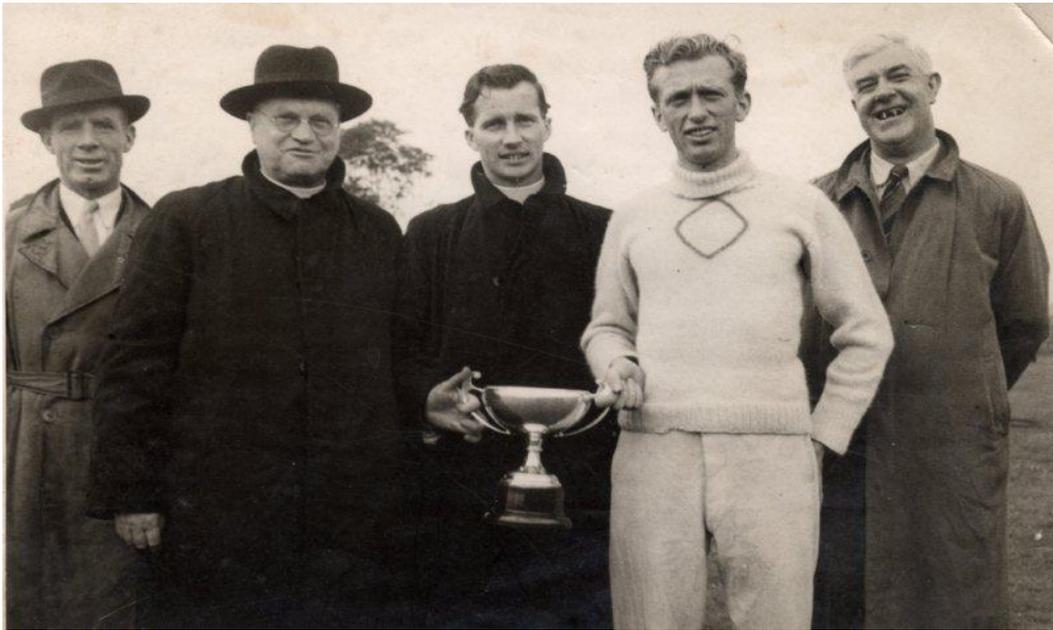
The series of pictures below shows an athletic meeting he helped to organized in the High Park in Lennoxton in July 1947 to which he had invited some members of the Irish Olympic Athletic Team.

At that time, it was thought that the first man to break the 4-minute mile was likely to be an Irishman - John Joe Barry also known as the '*Ballycunny Hare*', was part of the squad which came to Lennoxton and by then he was a famous athlete. John Joe came to Scotland on several occasions and once he competed at Parkhead municipal track in Glasgow specifically with a view to attempting the 4-minute mile. Sadly for John Joe and his fans in Scotland and Ireland, Roger Bannister was to be the first Athlete to break this barrier. John Joe Barrie is in the middle of the back row in the photograph below with white polo neck and Dave Guiney another famous athlete is in the back row at the right-hand side in vest and shorts. Also in these photos is an African Prince - Prince Adedoin.

Prince Adegboyega Folaranmi Adedoyin was a colourful character and was born 11 September 1922, in Nigeria. He competed in the London 1948 Olympic Games, representing Great Britain in the Long Jump and High Jump. He was also noted as one of the first black students to graduate from Queen's University Belfast. Given his celebrity status in the athletics world at the time this no doubt explained his connection to Fr O'Connell and the Irish Olympic team. The photo of Fr O'Connell shows him with his arm around a Glasgow man who was at the time the head of the Scottish Boxing Board of Control.



Fr O'Connell - Organises an Athletics Meeting at the High Park in Lennoxtown on 30th July 1947.



Fr Wheelan presents John Joe Barry with a cup at the Athletics meeting in the High Park in Lennoxtown on 30th July 1947. Fr O'Connell is in the centre. The other two men are unknown.



Fr Wheelan (left) presents John Joe Barry (centre) with a cup at the Athletics meeting in the High Park in Lennoxton on 30th July 1947. Fr O'Connell is on the right. The High Kirk and the grave yard wall form the backdrop.



Fr O'Connell with St Machan's Athletic Club c1941.

From an early stage in his ministry in Kilsyth Fr O'Connell promoted his interest in Athletics. With his great friend and fellow Irishman, Rev. Watson from the Burns and Old Parish Church, together with local athlete John Freebairn they founded the Colzium Athletics Club in Kilsyth. This club represented the town for many years and provided Athletes who distinguished themselves in competitions throughout the whole of the UK and at the highest level, thus providing a vehicle for the great upsurge of interest in athletics during the late 1970 and early 1980's.

This Colzium Athletics Club initiative in Kilsyth was in Fr O'Connell's eyes about building upon an earlier experiment in St Machan's in Lennoxton. He had tried successfully the concept of 'Community Games' so that different parts of the community could come together to enjoy sport without the sectarian barriers to be found in football. He used his contacts in Ireland and also his contacts from his time working at the BBC in London to great effect in attracting famous Athletes such as Brendan Foster the English International Athlete and now BBC Commentator and Eamonn Coghlan from Ireland to come and give coaching sessions to the Colzium Athletics Club members.

Through the Community Games movement, he established in Kilsyth, a close bond developed between the St. Patrick's Priest and the new Burns & Old Parish Church Minister who succeeded Rev Mr Watson. The personal friendship of Fr. O'Connell and Rev. Alistair McLachlan was to be long lasting. This close bond between the two men subsequently built into a closeness between the two church congregations and effectively became a legacy which was subsequently handed down to every new Priest that followed in Fr. O'Connell's footsteps at St Patrick's. The height of this close bond came during 1999 and 2000 when the parishioners of the Burns and Old Parish Church made a historic invitation to the parishioners of St Patrick's to use their church to say Mass during the period of renovation when St Patrick's church building was closed.

So for about a year during Fr Gerry Hand's time in Kilsyth, Saturday night vigil Mass took place in an active Church of Scotland church building - a remarkable and historic extension of Christian brotherhood. Sunday Masses were said in St. Patrick's School hall and the Burns and Old Parish Church handed back each Saturday night after Vigil Mass, to their own congregation for Sunday Services. This relationship between the two churches was founded by Fr. O'Connell and Rev. Alistair McLachlan who both take enormous credit for bringing the Christian denominations of Kilsyth tangibly closer together.

Fr O'Connell was active in Kilsyth in the community in many other ways. He was a founder member of the Kilsyth Rotary Club. During the Queen's Silver Jubilee year in 1977 he was Co Chairman of the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth Silver Jubilee Committee and he can be seen in the picture below meeting Prince Charles to discuss the Jubilee Youth Camp which took place at Westerwood the following year.



Fr O'Connell meets Prince Charles with the other members of the Cumbernauld & Kilsyth Silver Jubilee Committee at the Opening of the Westerwood Youth Camp in 1978. To Fr O'Connell's left is Mrs Deerin who taught at St Patrick's School.

For many years Fr O'Connell famously kept Eric the mynah bird - which he trained to speak. It had a large and sometimes choice vocabulary! The bird was kept in a large cage in front garden of the Parish House where it could talk to passers-by in the Low Craighends. Unfortunately, this had the side effect that from some of the passersby, it learned a larger and more colourfull vocabulary than any resident of the Parish House would otherwise ever have! Fr O'Connell also used the bird to great effect to attract the youth to his Masses and which are remembered by a generation of Kilsyth's Catholic men and women!

Fr O'Connell was appointed by Cardinal Gray to be one of the Scottish Priests who would organise and plan for the visit of His Holiness Pope John Paul II in June 1982 where he was to address the Youth of Scotland at Murrayfield Stadium Edinburgh and say Mass at Bellahouston Park Glasgow. The planning work was done at Westminster Diocese in London and this involved Fr O'Connell in much travel between London and Scotland. On one such visit his friend, the highly successful businessman and founder of Kwik-fit, Sir Tom Farmer, discovered that Fr O'Connell's schedule was very tight and he offered to fly him to London on his private Jet.



Fr O'Connell with Cardinal Gray at St Patrick's left and right with Sir Tom Farmer

Partly because of his association with broadcasting, Fr O'Connell was no stranger to celebrity which he used to good effect either for fund raising or for community events.

There was an active snooker club in St Patrick's hall which had two 12-foot snooker tables and a pool table and for many years was a 'Mecca' for the youth of the town when the sport became big on TV. There was a men's club and a Youth Club. In those days you could only see snooker on 'Pot Black' on BBC2 late on Thursday nights. So, Fr O'Connell

organized a charity celebrity snooker match in the church hall in about 1976 when the reigning world snooker champion(!) John Spencer played an exhibition game and some pro-am games with local Kilsyth men, one of whom was Old Tam Chalmers - founder of the Aberdeen Fish Shop.

In the early 1980's Fr. O'Connell found out about the Irish Band 'U2' who were playing in Glasgow at a sold-out gig. He had read about them in the Glasgow Herald where he discovered they were overtly Christian with their music and that some band members were Catholic and some were Protestant. No one could get tickets, but Fr O'Connell called someone he knew in Dublin and St Patrick's got 2 complimentary tickets to raffle for fund raising, courtesy of a contact he had at Regular Music. (The winner of the raffle was Anne McCluskey.)

For both the Kilsyth Community Games and for Kilsyth Civic Week, of which he was a particular supporter, Fr O'Connell often utilised his old celebrity contacts and, for many years Kilsyth was awash with celebrity visitors including Jock Stein (Celtic), Billy McNeil (Celtic), Sir Tom Farmer (Founder of Kwik-fit), Willie Woodburn (Rangers), George Young (Rangers), Frank Clement (International Athlete, Scotland), Brendan Foster (International Athlete, England), Eric Milligan (TV Chef), Eamonn Coghlan (International Athlete, Ireland), John Spencer (World Snooker Champion) and Tommy Younger (President of the SFA) Kevin Kelly (Chairman of Celtic) and many others. He always had an eye for the type of sport or famous person who was likely to make a community event attract a larger crowd or raise a larger sum of money for charity.

In 1980 he organised for the under 16 World Champion Irish Dance troop to come over from Dublin to visit Kilsyth as part of the St Patrick's Day celebrations where they were to give an exhibition of Irish Dancing in the church hall. This was all at a time before Riverdance which subsequently made Irish Dancing popular on a worldwide basis.



Canon O'Connell relaxes at St Mary's Leslie in Fife right and left at St Patrick's Chapel House Kilsyth.



As a result of the efforts of Canon O'Connell in the post as Vice Postulator for the Cause for the Canonisation of The Venerable Margaret Sinclair there was a special devotion in the Parish of St Patrick's Kilsyth to Margaret Sinclair. This is a devotion which remains to this day. The Parish of St. Patrick's Kilsyth remains dedicated to the cause for the Canonisation of the Venerable Margaret Sinclair. A cause which was promoted here in Kilsyth by the tireless work of Denis Canon O'Connell.

*Our thanks to George MacDonald, John Trower and Catriona Canavan for much of the information and the photographs on this page. Our thnaks also to Ailish Larkin, Librarian of St. Patrick's College, Thurles, Co Tipperary Ireland for helping with research.*

**St. Patrick's, Kilsyth**  
**28th Sunday of the Year 12-10-97**  
 822136, 823927(convent)

**Masses:** Sun. 6.30pm (vigil); 9.30am; 12.00 noon.  
**Confessions:** Wed. after the 10.00am Mass; Sat. after the 10.00am Mass, and 5.30pm-6.15pm.  
**Evening Devotions:** Tuesday 7.30pm  
**Baptisms:** These take place on the last Sunday of the month. A month's notice is requested.

**Canon O'Connell**

Canon O'Connell, parish priest from 1972-1987 died on Thursday at 11.15pm. His funeral will take place in the Cathedral at 12.00 Tuesday. A bus will go from the parish. Please sign up at back. £3 is the cost, and it will leave at 10.15am on Tuesday. His remains will be received into St. Mary's, Leslie at 7.30pm on Monday. *Mass will be said in the parish at 7.30pm Monday.*

**Family Week**

17th-26th October

**Families Make You What You Are!**

Friday: Parish Social and Presentation

to Sister Angela 7.30pm

Saturday: Mass with Archbishop O'Brien, celebrating Sister Angela's 50th Anniversary of Profession 11.00am

Sunday: Mrs Mary Cullen speaks at all Masses on our Week's theme

Tuesday: An afternoon's retreat for Senior Citizens 2.00pm-4.00pm

Tuesday: Family Service at 7.30pm

Wednesday: Ten Pin Bowling

Thursday: Women's Group Information Evening on Domestic Violence 7.30pm

Friday: Quizoke 8.00pm-12.00

Sunday: Parish Gathering and cheese and wine 7.00pm

**Readers**

Apologies to the new readers from Fr. Hand for not putting them on the new rota. We will change the rota from the 8/9th November, so will all readers pick up the revised rota on 1/2nd November. There will be a meeting for all readers to prepare for Advent on 27th October at 8.00pm. Would the new readers please come at 7.30pm.

**50th Anniversary**

**Sister Angela**

Sister Angela is celebrating her 50th anniversary of profession this month. There will be a parish social to celebrate this event on Friday 17th October in St. Patrick's Primary School. There will be a Mass at 11.00am in the church on Saturday 18th, to which everyone is invited. On that day there will be no 10.00am Mass. We are sure the parish will turn out in force for the social and the Mass.

Some people have said they forgot about last Sunday's collection for the parish presentation to Sister Angela. There will be two baskets at middle notice boards this week and next.

*Tickets are on sale for the social evening and presentation at the back of the church and from Margaret McCann (823776), Elizabeth Weldon (821184), Catherine Burns (823727), Moira Amachellum 822275*

**Ten Pin Bowling**

On Wednesday 22nd October as part of Family Week we will be organising a Ten Pin Bowling evening to Cumbernauld. The price is £3.80 for adults and £2.50 for children and young people (16 and under). Would you please sign up for this on the lists at the back. Would you also indicate whether you need transport and whether you would be able to offer lifts.

**Quizoke**

As part of the Family Week and as a fundraiser for ACROSS there is a Quizoke in the hall on Friday 24th October. Tickets £2.50 will be available for this next week.

**Church Cleaning:** Thursday and Friday morning. Preparing for Sister Angela's Golden Jubilee.

**Adoption and Foster Care For Children:** If you would like to find out about Adoption, Fostering, and Respite Care, contact St. Andrew's Children's Society, 113 Whitehouse Loan, Edinburgh. EH9 1BB. 0131-452-8248

**Tuesday**

No Mass or Eucharistic Service in the church in the morning.

**Eucharistic Adoration**

Fr. Glancy will be leading a holy hour at 7.30pm this Tuesday. All parishioners are welcome. Please consider committing yourself for a set time of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Forms are available at the back.

**The Parish Gathering**

We encourage everyone to take part in the parish general meeting and cheese and wine party on 26th October. In order to help with the catering, please start to sign up for the meeting now.

**Senior Citizens' Retreat**

We consider our senior parishioners an important source of faith and spirituality in the parish. An afternoon has been arranged for them on Tuesday 21st October. Please sign up for it on the list at the back.

**Covenants:** The lists of amounts paid up until the 5th October are at the back. Please check your covenant number.

**Collections:** 1997 1996

Offerory £1247 £1163

Build. Fund £ 300 £ 303

**Parish Draw:** Week 6: 1st £300, Michael Waters, 1310; 2nd £100, James Cooperwhite, 1157; 3rd £50, Margaret Turley, 1383

Week 7: 1st £300, Rosaleen Kerr, 1262; 2nd £100, Frances Starns, 2158; 3rd £50, K. Haggarty, 2184

**Workshop on Liturgical Music:** We encourage our parish musicians, singers, and anyone interested in music in the liturgy to take part in this workshop in St. John's, Constopphine, Edinburgh on Saturday 25th October 10.00am-4.00pm. Those interested please see one of the pastoral team.

**Mission Sunday**

Mission Sunday and the special collection should be on the 19th October, but due to the Family Week, we will celebrate it on 26th Oct.

**Autumn Fayre**

Meeting for all helpers at 7.30pm on Wednesday in convent. All parishioners please take raffle tickets and a blue bag with you to enable you to donate to the Fayre.