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A brief history of Catholicism in Yorkshire

In 1534, Henry VIII cut the links between England and the Catholic Church, and established the Church of England. But it was not until the Act of Uniformity in 1662 that the Church of England firmly secured its position as the state church. Catholicism lingered on in many parts of the country, but was in decline. In the nineteenth century, the Catholic faith enjoyed a revival.

Initially, legal restrictions made it difficult for Catholics to worship, so information about Catholics is often found in the records of the Church of England and in Quarter Sessions records. In 1778, the Catholic Relief Act gave Catholics some minor concessions in return for swearing an oath of allegiance to the Crown. In 1791, some further concessions in the Toleration Act of 1689 were extended to Catholics. Catholic worship was legalised on the condition that they registered their churches and the names of their priests with Quarter Sessions. The Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829 removed all major restrictions and enabled Catholics to sit in Parliament, to vote at elections and to hold property unconditionally.

In West Yorkshire a small number of old Catholic chapels existed discreetly under the protection of local Catholic gentry. But the majority of Catholic churches were not established until the middle of the nineteenth century, largely as a result of immigration, most notably from Ireland.

How can I find out about my Roman Catholic ancestors?

Catholic congregations kept unofficial registers of births, marriages and deaths, but most of these are no older than the Relief Act of 1778. In 1837, Catholic and Protestant nonconformist churches were invited to send their registers to London for enquiry into their authenticity. Many Catholic registers were not forwarded to London, but in Yorkshire, Bishop Briggs insisted that they should be. The registers of 45 Yorkshire Catholic churches are therefore now at the National Archives in London (see <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk> for further information). The public libraries in Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield have microfilm copies of those registers which relate to their districts. Leeds Central Library has copies of all the Yorkshire registers.

Between 1754 and 1836 it was common practice for Catholics to go through the form of Church of England rites before being married by a Catholic priest. In these cases, marriages are recorded in Church of England registers (see Collections Guide 1).

Most Catholic registers have been retained by their churches in West Yorkshire. However, a microfilming scheme has been jointly organised by the Diocese of Leeds and West Yorkshire Archive Service to make these registers more widely available. This guide lists Roman Catholic registers available at West Yorkshire Archive Service offices.

What Roman Catholic registers are available at West Yorkshire Archive Service?

This Collections Guide lists Roman Catholic registers available at West Yorkshire Archive Service offices. Many of the registers are available only in microfiche form, as it is the current policy of the Diocese of Leeds (which covers all of West Yorkshire) to retain original records in their churches. Where material is filmed, only records more than 100 years old are available at West Yorkshire Archive Service offices.

Requests to view registers less than 100 years old, and enquiries regarding other records of Roman Catholic churches (including closed churches), should be directed to:

Leeds Diocesan Archives
Hinsley Hall
62 Headingley Lane
Leeds
LS6 2BX
Telephone: +44 (0)113 261 8031
Fax: +44 (0)113 261 8035

The dates given below are covering dates only, with no indication of gaps or the number of registers involved. The 'WYAS Office' column shows where the registers are available. Microfiche copies of registers have been distributed around the Service and are available in each office.

A few original Roman Catholic registers have been deposited by the General Registrar. Registers which have not yet been filmed are indicated in **bold** in the list which follows. These can only be viewed at the WYAS office which holds the original registers.

What information do Roman Catholic registers contain?

Most Roman Catholic registers follow a standardised printed format, although information in pre-nineteenth century registers may be more variable and the entries heavily abbreviated.

Events are recorded in date order, but entries are written in Latin until after the reforms of the second Vatican Council in 1965.

Roman Catholic registers are frequently annotated with information such as dates of marriage and death of the person baptised.

Burials – The printed form of burial registers usually records:

- Date of death
- Age of deceased
- Date of burial

Baptisms - Catholic baptism registers usually contain the following information:

- date of birth
- date of baptism
- child's name
- father's name
- mother's maiden name
- names of sponsors (Godparents)

Some registers also record the residence of the parents.

A typical Latin entry might read:
Die 30 Decembris 1864 nata et die 3 Januarii 1865 baptizata est Susanna Delaney filia Joannis Delaney et Mariae Delaney (olim Kennedy) conjugum: A me Eduardus Johnson. Patrinus fuit Ricardus Procter, Matrina fuit Anna Burns.

This translates as:

Born on 30 December 1864 and baptized on 3 January 1865, Susannah Delaney daughter of John Delaney and Mary Delaney (née Kennedy), by me, Edward Johnson. Godfather: Richard Procter, Godmother: Anne Burns.

Marriages - The information given in marriage records is more variable, but always includes at least the following:

- date of the marriage
- names of persons marrying, including the woman's maiden name
- names of two witnesses

Other information that may be supplied includes:

- residences (of all four people)
- ages
- occupations
- father's names

In rare cases the relationships of the witnesses to the people marrying is also specified.

A typical Latin entry might read:

Anno 1856 die 28 mensis Aprilis, Ego Eduardus Waterton in Matrimonio conjunxi Joannem Breen (Alverthorpe) filium Patricii et Elizabetham Travis filiam Francisci Travis, Praesentibus testibus Gulielmus McDermott, Margarita McDermott.

This translates as:

On 28 April 1856, I, Edward Waterton married John Breen (of Alverthorpe) son of Patrick and Elizabeth

Travis daughter of Francis Travis, witnessed by William McDermott, Margaret McDermott.

Useful Dates

- 1534 Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy established the Church of England.
- 1661-1665 The Clarendon Code was a series of four Acts of Parliament including the Act of Uniformity (1662), designed to settle the religious problems of the Restoration of the monarchy.
- 1673 Test Act - those holding public office had to receive the sacrament, take the oaths of supremacy and allegiance, and make a declaration against the Catholic belief of transubstantiation.
- 1689 Concessions given to Protestant nonconformists in the Toleration Act but not extended to Catholics.
- 1715 & 1717 Catholics were required by two Acts to register their names and estates with the Clerk of the Peace of the county where they lived.
- 1778 Catholic Relief Act allowed Catholics to own property, inherit land, and join the army.
- 1780 Gordon Riots in London against the 1778 Relief Act.
- 1791 A further Catholic Relief Act allowed Catholic chapels and schools to be registered with the Clerk of the Peace. Catholics who swore a prescribed oath were allowed to worship according to Catholic rites.
- 1829 The Catholic Emancipation Act enabled Catholics to worship freely, to sit in Parliament, to vote at elections and to hold property unconditionally.
- 1836 The Marriage Act enabled Catholic chapels to be licensed for marriages to take place. Each ceremony had to be conducted in the presence of the district registrar who was to record the details in a separate register. There was no necessity for the church to keep a register of its own.
- 1837 A Royal Commission invited Catholic and Protestant nonconformist churches to deposit their earlier registers with the Registrar General for enquiry into their authenticity. Many Catholic registers were not forwarded to London, but in Yorkshire, Bishop Briggs insisted that they should be. These registers are now held at the National Archives in London.
- 1850 Restoration of the Roman Catholic clerical hierarchy in Britain. Yorkshire comprised the Catholic Diocese of Beverley.
- 1878 Diocese of Beverley divided into the Diocese of Leeds (covering the West Riding of Yorkshire) and Middlesbrough (the North and East Ridings).
- 1898 Marriage Act permitted Catholic churches and Protestant nonconformist chapels to appoint an authorised person, answerable to the Registrar General, to keep a set of duplicate marriage registers and act as a registrar of marriages.

Place of Worship	Collection Reference	Baptisms	Marriages	Deaths	WYAS Office
Aberford Chapel	RC21	1795-1806 1841-1855	1806-1841		All
Bingley Sacred Heart	RC10	1873-1907	1875-1892	1874-1907	All
Bradford St Ann St Joseph St Mary St Patrick	RC4 RC3 RC1 RC2	1881-1905 1881-1905 1822-1907 1855-1906	1881-1905 1881-1906 1822-1906 1855-1906	1856-1907	All All All All
Burley Sacred Heart	RC15 WYL859/4/1	1891-1907	1893-1906 1989-1992		All All
Castleford St Joseph	RC26	1881-1906			All
Clifford St Edward	RC19	1842-1905	1845-1894	1842-1891	All
Garforth St Benedict	RC21	1795-1895	1806-1898		All
Halifax St Mary	MICRO	1827-1840	1836-1840		Calderdale
Hemsworth Sacred Heart Ackworth Grange	RC25 RC25	1891-1907 1883-1897			All All
Holbeck St Francis of Assisi	RC16	1887-1907	1887-1907		All
Horsforth St Mary	RC20	1893-1901			All
Huddersfield St Patrick	KX322	1828-1993	1829-1993		Kirklees
Hunslet St Joseph	RC14	1857-1907	1862-1906	1857-1891	All
Ilkley Sacred Heart (formerly Myddleton Lodge)	RC7 64D86	1759-1898	1798-1891 1977-1984	1849-1858	All All
Keighley St Anne	RC8	1835-1907	1845-1906		All
Killingbeck Cemetery	RC22			1895-1907	All
Kirkstall St Bernardette	WYL849/4/2		1971-1974		All

Place of Worship	Collection Reference	Baptisms	Marriages	Deaths	WYAS Office
Leeds					
St Anne (Cathedral)	RC11	1834-1907	1814-1907		All
Mount St Mary	RC12	1851-1907	1854-1903	1869-1899	All
	WYL859/4/4		1982-1989		All
St Patrick	RC13	1873-1899	1831-1906		All
	RC13	1904-1907			All
New Wortley					
Holy Family	RC17	1879-1906	1880-1906		All
Parlington					
Chapel	RC21	1757-1799			All
Seacroft					
Our Lady of Perpetual Succour	WYL859/4/5		1976-1989		All
Shipley					
St Mary and St Walburga	RC9	1863-1903	1866-1895		All
Sicklinghall					
Immaculate Conception	RC23	1823-1896	1832-1847	1853-1898	All
Stanningley					
Church of the Holy Spirit, Eleven Lane Ends	WYL859/4/3		1976-1986		All
Wakefield					
St Austin	RC24	1828-1907	1844-1903	1856-1896	All
Wetherby					
St Joseph	RC18			1853-1893	All
Wilsden					
St Monica	68D89		1986-1988		All
Wrose					
Our Lady and St Anthony	83D97		1980-1994		Bradford

ROMAN CATHOLIC LATIN GLOSSARY

Most Roman Catholic registers are written in Latin until after the reforms of the second Vatican Council in 1965, and entries are often abbreviated.

Like modern German, Latin is a case language – that is, words take on different endings corresponding to the different position of the word in the sentence. Some words also have different endings according to gender. This glossary gives words with endings as they most frequently occur in Roman Catholic registers. For an introduction to the Latin language see E A Gooder *Latin for Local History: an introduction* (1978).

First names in Catholic registers are usually also Latinised. Some common names are included in the following list.

Aetatis	Age
Anno	In the year
Baptizatus/Baptizata or Bapt.	Baptised
Brigida	Bridget
Conjugo, -avi, -atum (verb) including conjugum, conjunxi (in Matrimonio) or abbreviated to conji.	Joined (in Matrimony)
De	Of
Defunctus/Defuncta	Dead
Die (20 ^o)	On the (20 th) day
Et	And
Filia/Filiam	Daughter
Filius/Filium	Son
Gulielmus	William
Jacobus	James
Joannis	John
Josephus	Joseph
Matrina	Godmother
Mensis	In the month
Olim	Once, (in relation to married women) néé
Patricius	Patrick
Patrinus	Godfather
Sepultum est	Buried
Sponsori or Sp.	Sponsors (Godparents)
Vidua	Widow