

After Reformation – before 1830

It was after the Reformation of the middle sixteenth century that the number of Catholics left in Dumbarton became very small indeed and according to McLeod's History of Dunbartonshire "the few faithful adherents of the Old Faith assembled at intervals within the ruins of the Old Parish Church of Cardross which stands in the Levensgrove policies".

The Collegiate Church of St. Mary founded in 1450 by the Duchess of Albany, Countess of Lennox, was pillaged and the College being no longer required for religious purposes, the patronage of St. Mary's Chapel reverted to the Burgh in terms of the bond granted by the Duchess.

The stones with which the College had been built were used by the inhabitants of the Burgh not only in erecting new bulwarks to protect the town from the encroachment of the River Leven, but also in building and repairing their houses.

In the middle of the nineteenth century when the railway station was constructed, the arch of the main doorway of St. Mary's was taken down and re-erected in Church Street to form a gateway to the Burgh school.

Later it was transferred to its present site in the grounds of the Municipal Buildings and now stands upon land, which if not actually occupied by the College in the past, formed part of its policies. This condition of things lasted well into the eighteenth century and it was only on rare occasions that the few faithful adherents received the comforting ministrations of a priest.

Towards the end of the century the number of Catholics had grown considerably and they were able to meet once a fortnight in a store in Kane's Pend in College Street where Holy Mass was celebrated.

"And there within a narrow room up Kane's Pend in the College Street they heard the Sacrifice of Praise was offered secretly." (Centenary Ode).

College Street was later referred to as the "Irish Channel" because of the preponderance of Catholic residents and according to one diarist "University Avenue" in reference to the number of graduates it produced.

During this period Dumbarton was under the care of the priest resident in Greenock whose Mission included almost the whole of the Firth of Clyde.

Prior to the building of the first post-Reformation Catholic Church, Mass was said in various houses in College Street.