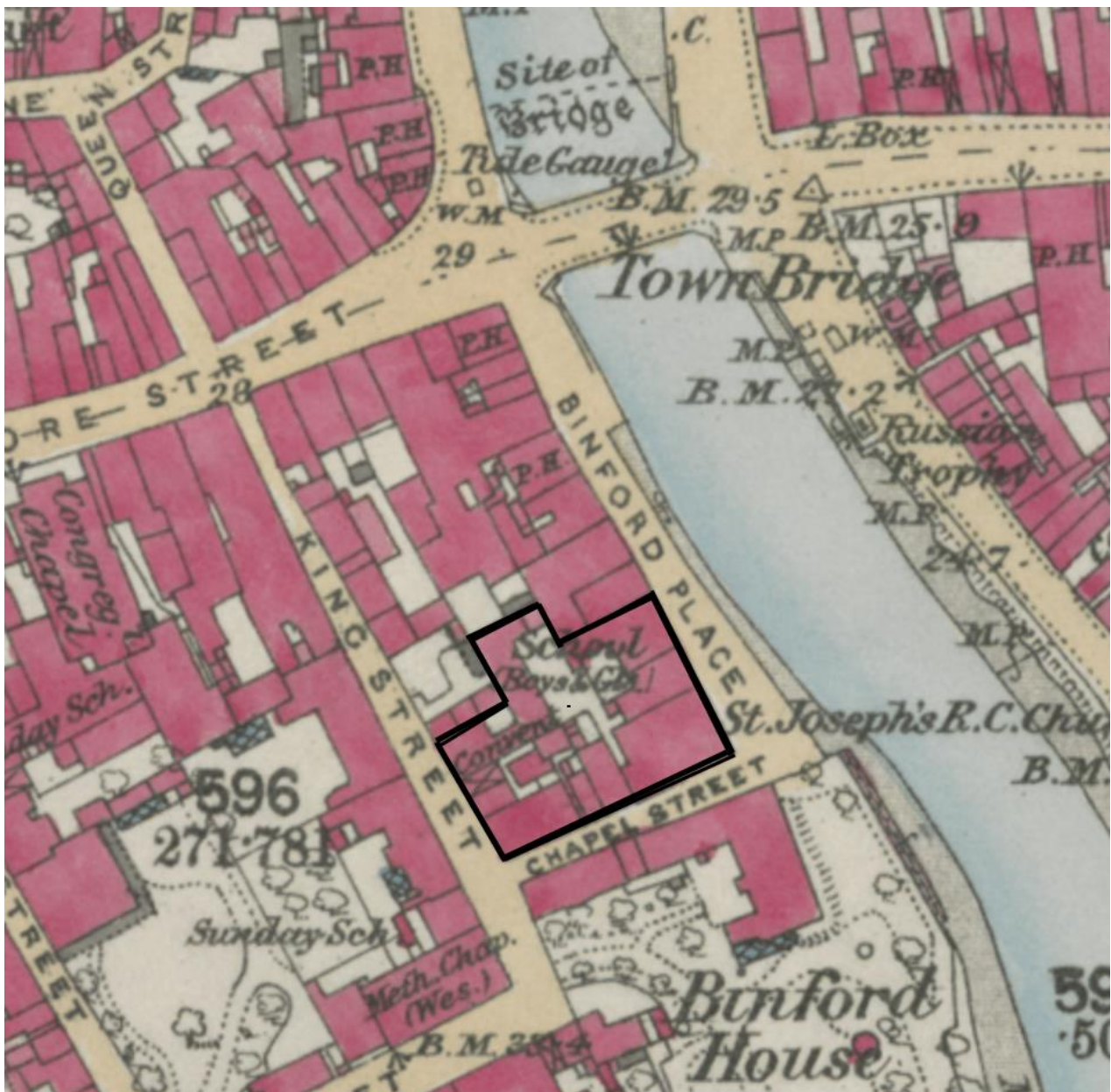


St Joseph's on the Quay*, Bridgwater

by
Tony Woolrich

The chapel of St Joseph of Arimathea, Gordon Terrace, had become too small for the congregation by 1878, and plans were made to build a new church in the centre of the town. Land was purchased in December 1879 bounded by Binford Place and Chapel Street. The property along Binford place became the Presbytery and the part along Chapel Street became the site of the church. The tender for building was awarded to Mr Kitch of Salmon Parade. The foundation stone was laid on 25 October 1881, the church was opened on 22 June 1882. It cost £866 10 0. Mr Philip Hewett (1806-1888) was a major benefactor. A school was also built on land beside the new church and opened on 27 March 1883 with 18 pupils. In 1885 a community of the Sisters of Charity moved to premises in King Street and took over the education at the school until 1891.



Site of St Joseph's property. OS map, 25in. - 1 mile, 1880s

The cottage next to the church later became the Parish Rooms, and the remainder of the cottages along Chapel Street became a laundry in 1888, where the sisters did washing for the town. It was later the site of the Co-operative store.

The church comprises a chancel, nave and north chapel dedicated to St Joseph. The reredos under the east window takes the form of an arcade on either side of a monstrance throne with a tall Gothic canopy. A rood beam with figures was added to the chancel arch in 1890. A polygonal stone pulpit carved with saints and Gothic ornament was installed in 1893.

The church was consecrated in 1907 by Bishop Burton. Canon Scoles attended and paid all the expenses.

The Co-operative building next to the church was purchased in 1979 for £20,000 for demolition to provide space for the extension of the church. Demolition started in October 1980. Building began in May 1981, and the new extension was used for the first time at Christmas Midnight Mass, 1981. A new altar was installed in 1981 when it was brought forward at the time of the construction of the extension to the Nave



1) St Joseph's and the Presbytry



2) The 1981 extension



3) General view of the Nave



4) The Chapel

Photographs – all Bing images

1), 2) & 4) are taken from <https://taking-stock.org.uk/building/bridgwater-st-joseph/>
3) is from www.churches-uk-ireland.org

The Architect

Alexander Joseph Cory Scoles (1844 – 1920)

Alexander Joseph Cory Scoles (1844 – 1920) was an architect and Roman Catholic priest. He was born in Hammersmith, London, the third son of the architect Joseph John Scoles, whose works included the Roman Catholic churches of the Immaculate Conception in Farm Street, London; Saint Francis Xavier in Liverpool and St Ignatius in Preston, Lancashire. He was the brother of Father Ignatius Scoles, SJ, also a church architect. He studied as an architect under the direction of his father, until the latter's death in 1863. After that Scoles became a pupil of Samuel Joseph Nicholl (1826–1903). His early professional work was done in partnership with his cousin John Myrie Cory (1846–1893). Alexander Scoles became a priest, and joined the Diocese of Clifton, later becoming a canon. He was evidently Diocesan architect. Initially he was parish priest in Bridgwater and on 26 September 1891, he became parish priest of the Church of the Holy Ghost in Yeovil, which he also built. He moved from Yeovil and the Diocese of Clifton in 1901 and became a parish priest in Basingstoke. He died in the Hospital of St John and St Elizabeth on 29 December 1920 in London and is buried in the grounds of Holy Ghost Church in Basingstoke. His Wikipedia article lists 29 Catholic churches he designed in the south of England between 1882 and 1915. There could well be more.

Father Scoles was appointed parish priest in September 1881 and as well as designing and building the church, he bought the St Saviour's estate and built the houses in St Saviour's Avenue, as well as the open-air swimming bath on the other side of the road. He also built three villas in Victoria Road, named Marie House. He also drew up plans to convert St Saviour's House as a boys' home to be cared for by monks, but it came to nothing. It is now Blake Hall.

Father Scoles was very highly regarded in the town, where he was a member of the Board of Guardians. He was also active in Friendly Societies. When he left the Borough Council presented him with a purse containing £50 and an illuminated testimonial.

Philip M. Hewett, Benefactor of the church.

Bridgwater Mercury - Wednesday 11 August 1886

In our last issue the late Mr. Philip M. Hewett was by mistake described as native of Bridgwater. He was born at Langport in 1806, was brought up near Axminster, Devon and married in 1840, at the Temple Church, Bristol, to Jemima H. Lloyd, daughter of Samuel Vaughan Lloyd, of Belgrave House, Salmon Parade, Bridgwater, Captain of the 2nd Queen's, and niece to Dr. Eyre, late Canon Residentiary and treasurer of Wells Cathedral and Canon Residentiary also of Salisbury Cathedral, and Rector of Fovant and Chilmark and to Lord Chief Justice Eyre. After the death of his wife, fifteen years ago, Mr. Philip M. Hewett resided at St. Martino, near Boulogne Sur Mer, France, until three and a half years ago, when he came to Bridgwater to see the Church of St. Joseph, which owes its erection to his munificence, and resided until his death at the adjoining Presbytery. Whilst at Boulogne, he took great interest in this town of Bridgwater, and besides giving a thousand guineas to its Infirmary, he sent, through the Rev. J. J. Archdeacon, donations to the soup-kitchen and blanket clubs of 1879-80, and in 1882, through the Rev. A. J. C. Scoles, other

donations to the Provident Coal Club and St. Joseph's blanket club, and £50 towards the erection of St. Joseph's elementary school. The funeral took place on Thursday in St. Joseph's church, and was conducted by the Rev. A. J. C. Scoles in the unavoidable absence of the Hon. and Right Rev. W. Clifford, Lord Bishop of Clifton, who telegraphed his [*sic* intention, TW] of coming down if the funeral could have taken place on Monday. The body, enclosed in a polished oak coffin, was carried into the church, which was handsomely draped in black for the occasion on Wednesday eve, and the first part of the service was made at eleven o'clock on Thursday morning. After mass for the repose of his soul. and the second part of the burial service had been said, the body was conveyed to St. John's new cemetery.

This narrative has been compiled from two most excellent histories of St Joseph's.

1) *St Joseph's Catholic Church, Bridgwater*, by Frank and Emily Loxston. This was written in the 1950s, as a record of their early memories of the church. and transcribed in 1984 by J. C. D. Smith

2) *Bridgwater's Catholic Past*, by Wilf Drum. It was written as a serial for *St Joseph's Parish Magazine*, Easter 1961 to Christmas 1972.

Both are online at: <http://www.sjbwtr.plus.com/parishhistory.html>

See also Father Scoles's Wikipedia page: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Scoles

See also a comprehensive architectural account of the building: <https://taking-stock.org.uk/building/bridgwater-st-joseph/>

**Note: strictly St Joseph's isn't on the town's 'modern' quayside, although Binford Place was once referred to as 'Back Quay', and this designation neatly avoids confusion with the Gordon Terrace chapel and captures its riverside location.*

Written and edited by Tony & Jane Woolrich

15/03/2020