

WEST GRINSTEAD: A CENTRE OF CATHOLICISM IN SUSSEX, 1671–1814

by Timothy J. McCann

INTRODUCTION

Travellers who turn off the A 24 along the B 2135 to Partridge Green, are often surprised by the complex of ecclesiastical buildings to be found at the extreme south-east of the present West Grinstead Park. Here, apparently in the middle of nowhere, they will discover a substantial Catholic church, standing between a delightful timber-framed house, with a later Georgian façade, known as 'Priest's House' (Fig. 1), and a large adjacent building, which began as a priory of Dominican nuns, became a community home and is now a private school for Arab children. The simple explanation for the existence of this Catholic enclave is that most of the buildings are

the result of the energy and dedication of a French priest, Mgr. Jean-Marie Denis, who served the mission at West Grinstead from 1863 to 1900.

When Mgr. Denis arrived at West Grinstead, the mission consisted of a small meadow of 1 a. leased out for £4 a year; the Priest's House, which housed a small chapel seating about 60 people in two rooms on the first floor; two small gardens, and a small schoolroom behind the house. The extent of the mission district was between 12 and 20 miles, and it was bounded by

a line which runs on the north from Rudgwick to Slinfold, Horsham, Nuthurst, Plummer's Plain, Handcross, Whiteman's Green and Cuckfield to Lindfield;



Fig. 1. Priest's House, West Grinstead, the centre of the mission since 1754.

on the east from Lindfield by the High Road through Wivelsfield [to] Ditchling; on the south from Ditchling above Keymer and below Hurstpierpoint, [via] Henfield to Eaton's Wharf, and thence in a southerly and westerly direction above Wiston Park, Washington, Sullington, by Billingshurst to Rudgwick.¹

To serve this extensive community, Mgr. Denis reopened the school in 1863 in the small school-room; in 1869 he founded the Priory of St. Dominic with an orphanage administered by the Dominican Sisters; in 1875 he built the present church; and shortly afterwards he established the shrine of Our Lady of Consolation, which soon became a centre of pilgrimage, and, from 1880 until the establishment of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton in 1965, was host to an annual pilgrimage from the Diocese of Southwark.

For the original explanation of the existence of this Catholic centre in West Grinstead, however, it is necessary to discover why there was a mission in the area for Mgr. Denis to serve. At the Elizabethan settlement of religion in 1558, the Catholic hierarchy, with one exception, refused to accept the new religion and were deprived of their sees. England was formally severed from papal jurisdiction, the new Prayer Book was imposed, and any other rite forbidden. Several hundred of the clergy were deprived of their livings or resigned their cures, but for the first few years of the reign few Catholics were actually recusants. Many of the deprived clergy simply retreated into the houses of the Catholic gentry, becoming their chaplains, and starting the process of seigneurial Catholicism whereby the Catholic squire and his estate rather than the parish church became the focus of parish life. After 1570, however, the situation changed. By then the political context had altered with the flight of Mary Queen of Scots to England in 1568; the revolt of the Northern Earls; the Papal Bull excommunicating Queen Elizabeth in 1570; and the Ridolfi plot. Henceforth Catholics were more actively persecuted: the penalty for hearing mass was imprisonment; the penalty for non-attendance at the parish church, hitherto 12*d.* a week, was a fine of £20 a month, with the

forfeiture of all goods and two thirds of real property if the fine could not be paid; and the penalty for the treason of being a priest was often death. At the same time, Catholicism itself was changing, transformed by the new attitude created by the Council of Trent.

This Counter-Reformation Catholicism was to make great demands on the English Catholics, but it also inspired greater loyalties. English Catholics, while being persecuted by the regime, began gaining converts in England from those whose religious aspirations could not be satisfied within the Elizabethan Church. Cardinal Allen founded the English College at Douai in 1568, and daughter colleges were founded at Rome, Valladolid, Seville, Lisbon and Paris; their purpose, to train young men to work as secular priests in England. The religious orders founded their own seminaries on the Continent, and, within ten years, a steady flow of priests was sent back to minister to the English Catholics.

THE CARYLL FAMILY

The Caryll family is a classic example of seigneurial Catholicism, providing a safe haven for their Catholic tenants, and access to the sacramental life through their chaplains; as patrons first of Benedictine monks, then Jesuits, later Franciscan friars, and finally of secular priests at West Grinstead, it was the 'onlie begetter' of the Catholic community in the parish.

The Carylls² were an old Sussex family that had refounded its fortunes through the law and the tenure of Crown offices, and later through the Sussex iron industry. Sir John Caryll had been Attorney General to King Henry VII; his son Sir John Caryll was Attorney General to the Duchy of Lancaster, and inherited his father's stewardship of the Rape of Bramber. As Attorney for the Court of First Fruits and Tenths in 1539, the younger Sir John administered revenues confiscated from the Catholic Church by King Henry VIII, though he refused to subscribe to the Prayer Book of 1549, and

ensured that much of the church lands, in Sussex at least, remained in Catholic hands. Sir John's son, Edward Caryll of Harting, entered the Inner Temple and was Sheriff of Sussex and Surrey in 1571, although he never took the Oath of Supremacy.

The Caryll family was linked by marriage to almost all the other prominent Catholic families in Sussex, such as the Gages of Firle and Bentley in Framfield, the Shelleys of Michelgrove in Clapham and Warminghurst, and the Brownes of Cowdray in Midhurst, as well as to others outside the county, such as the Cottons of Warblington in Hampshire, the Bedingfields of Norfolk and the Molyneux of Lancashire. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth they afford an outstanding and well documented example of a Catholic family maintaining its influence. The family was also wealthy; Edward Caryll's lands were assessed at 400 marks per year in 1577,³ and his nephew, John Caryll, was said to be worth 1,000 marks a year at the same date.

The first homes of the Caryll family in Sussex were at Warnham and at Shipley, where their presence at Bentons ensured a sizeable Catholic community in the parish.⁴ In the 1590s the family extended its landholdings by purchasing a considerable estate based on Ladyholt in Harting. They seem to have acquired the manor of West Grinstead by 1638, for in that year the manorial chapel in West Grinstead church was said to belong to 'the old Lady Caryll'⁵—Margaret, the wife of Sir Thomas Caryll of Shipley. From her the manor passed to her daughter Philippa Caryll and Philippa's husband Henry Parker, Lord Morley and Monteaule, and from them descended through the family with the manor of Knepp in Shipley. The Caryll family now had a substantial estate at West Grinstead, Shipley and Washington to match the Ladyholt estate on the Hampshire border.

It was the family custom for the West Grinstead estate, however, to be the home of the younger son, while the elder son usually chose to live at Ladyholt, and it was to be several times

sequestered, i.e. confiscated, for recusancy. It was sequestered in the 1640s and 1650s;⁶ and although John Caryll evidently held the manor in 1671 when he established his fund for the Catholic mission at West Grinstead, the manor house was occupied by his younger son Richard, who lived at West Grinstead from at least 1664⁷ until his death in 1701. However, when in 1711 his elder brother John, who lived at Ladyholt, died without heirs, both Ladyholt and West Grinstead descended to Richard's son, John Caryll, the playwright and friend of Alexander Pope.⁸ In 1715 the manor house at West Grinstead was again sequestered for recusancy,⁹ and, as a result, John Caryll went to live at Ladyholt, where he remained until his death in 1736. It was not until 1736 that the sequestered property was restored to the family,¹⁰ when John Baptist Caryll, the last of his line, succeeded his grandfather, his own father having predeceased him in 1718.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE MISSION

In spite of a local tradition that suggests that West Grinstead was a centre of Catholicism unbroken from the Elizabethan settlement,¹¹ there is no documentary evidence to support the suggestion, and there is no evidence of a significant recusant presence in the parish of West Grinstead before the arrival of the Caryll family in the 17th century. One James Bull was repeatedly presented for not coming to church, for being a recusant and for standing excommunicate, both by the churchwardens and the Assizes in the 1620s,¹² but not one single recusant from West Grinstead was presented to the Assizes between 1559 and 1597.¹³ The 1642 Protestation against the Catholic religion was signed by 174 adult males from the parish, and by both churchwardens and both overseers, but none refused to take it,¹⁴ and in 1676 the churchwardens presented that 'we have no Dissenters in our parish. We have none that refuse to receive communion.'¹⁵

The Old Brotherhood was established in 1623 as the Chapter of the secular clergy who

acted as a central authority in the absence of a Catholic bishop. A document in the Old Brotherhood Archives, now at Westminster, records the first Caryll bequest relating to the Catholics of West Grinstead. On 30 May 1649 the document recorded that the Chapter

received the day and yeare above wrighten of Dame Margaret Caryll of West Grinstead the summe of two hundred and fifty pounds for and in consideration of a perpetuall obligation, of saying foure trentualls of masses yearly and for ever, wherof one hundred of the said masses are to be say'd for herone soule, the other twenty masses for the soules of her husbände Sir Thomas Carrell, her mother, her daughter, the Lady Mollinau, which obligations shall be faythfully performed. This I say received by me. John Jennyngs.¹⁶

The bequest was accepted by the Chapter on the following day,¹⁷ and it was recorded later that John Jennings would perform the obligations for the remainder of his life.¹⁸ There is some evidence that John Jennings became Lady Mary Caryll's chaplain, and was thus the first missionary at West Grinstead; certainly he was Archdeacon of Sussex, and thus the senior of the secular priests working in the county, from 1657 to 1667, and left bequests to various Sussex priests and to Viscountess Montague of Cowdray in his will of 1678.¹⁹

The provision by John Caryll in 1671 of a priest specifically to serve West Grinstead marked the formal start of the West Grinstead mission, and led to the appointment of the first chaplain of the mission whose successors serve West Grinstead today. On 1 October 1671 John Caryll raised a mortgage on the manor of Lodsworth to provide £1,000, £600 of which was given to Humphrey Waring, the Dean of the Chapter of Secular Clergy, to support three priests, of whom one was to live at West Grinstead and serve the locality, while the other two were to act as 'riding missionaries' in Sussex and Hampshire.²⁰ The Caryll family reserved to themselves the right of nomination. The first beneficiaries of the Caryll endowment were Serenus Cressy, who was to have £12 a year being one third of the interest on £600 for life, and George Middleton and John Ward, the 'riding

missionaries', who were to share the other two thirds.²¹

THE EARLIEST MISSIONERS

Serenus Cressy, the first recipient of John Caryll's endowment, was one of the most famous English Catholics of his time. A member of Lucius Falkland's literary circle at Great Tew (Oxon.), he made a public recantation of his errors before the Roman Inquisition in 1646,²² and joined the Benedictine order at St. Gregory's, Douai, in 1649. His most famous work, his *Exomolgesis*, is an account of the motives for his conversion, and he also edited the works of the English mystics, Julian of Norwich and Augustine Baker. He was chaplain to the English Benedictine nuns at Paris from 1631 to 1652, and Sub-Prior at St. Laurence's, Dieulouard, 1652, and at St. Gregory's, Douai, 1653 to 1660, before coming back to England as chaplain to the Dowager Queen Henrietta at Somerset House.²³ There is some evidence of his being at West Grinstead between 1666 and his death in 1674.²⁴

Dom Gilbert Dolan suggested that Cressy was succeeded in his work at West Grinstead by Robert Prendal from 1674 to 1682,²⁵ but the next chaplain to serve the mission for whom definite evidence can be found was a member of the family and another Benedictine monk. Peter Alexis Caryll was the second son of John Caryll and Catherine Petre, and brother of John Caryll of Ladyholt and Richard Caryll of West Grinstead. Caryll was professed at St. Gregory's, Douai, in 1654, held office as confessor to the Benedictine nuns at Brussels from 1661 to 1669, and returned to his monastery at St. Gregory's as Prior between 1673 and 1675.²⁶ Eventually he came home to West Grinstead to take charge of the family mission, and died there on 29 October 1686. He was buried in the parish church on 31 October and was recorded in the Church of England registers as 'Peter Caryll died worth nothing'.²⁷

Peter Alexis Caryll was succeeded by Thomas Churchill, who had been unanimously

ected Archdeacon of Sussex by his Catholic brethren in 1683.²⁸ Churchill, who was born in 1628, entered Douai in 1646, was ordained at Cambrai in 1653, and went on the English mission almost immediately. In his autobiography²⁹ he makes clear that he was working in Sussex as early as 1665, and that he served in Jamaica in the reign of King James II. In a letter to Bishop Leyburn, Vicar Apostolic of England and Wales, Churchill stated that he received £5 a year for serving West Grinstead.³⁰ A document among the Old Brotherhood Archives records that

ther having been a fund of ten pounds per annum settled for a clergyman who should helpe ye poor³¹ about Grinstead in Sussex, and Mr. Churchill who perform'd yt obligation having been forced by ye persecution, to be absent for some years, twas put to the vote whither Mr. Churchill should be oblig'd to refund ye said pension for ye years he was absent.³²

It was resolved that the question should be settled between Churchill and the priest who actually served the mission, and it is clear that Peter Alexis Caryll had served at West Grinstead during Churchill's long absences.

Thomas Churchill did not die until 1705, but by then he had lived abroad for many years. In that same year, the first entry was made in the surviving West Grinstead Catholic register,³³ recording the baptism on 5 November of Mary Paoli. The officiating priest signed the register as Peter Jones, but he has not been identified, and it was to be another 70 years before the register was kept regularly.

THE JESUIT MISSION

By the time a regular list of chaplains can be identified, the West Grinstead mission seems to have been served by the Society of Jesus. Ignatius Staffurd was the first Jesuit known to have served there. Most Catholic priests adopted an alias for reasons of security on entering an English College abroad, and Staffurd was also known as Thorpe. He was born in 1632, became a Jesuit in 1672, and served the mission in Wales

before coming to West Grinstead from 1710 to 1711.³⁴ His personal register has survived and has been published;³⁵ it includes some West Grinstead names in its pages.

Ignatius Staffurd was succeeded by another member of the Caryll family. Charles Caryll was the third son of Peter Caryll of Shipley and Mary Tufton. He was a nephew of the Benedictine Peter Alexis Caryll, and a cousin of the Jesuit Richard Caryll, who, under the alias of Paul Kelly, was the family's other chaplain at Ladyholt. Charles Caryll, who was born in 1685, and who became a Jesuit in 1704, was probably at West Grinstead from 1714 to 1716,³⁶ immediately after his ordination to the priesthood. He served later in Staffordshire and at Staplehill in Dorset. The next Jesuit priest who is known to us is John Hodges alias Massey,³⁷ who was listed as 'a gentleman by the name of Massey' in a return of recusants at West Grinstead in 1727.³⁸ He served the mission from then until 1734, and was succeeded by a number of other Jesuit priests whose chaplaincies only lasted for short periods. Anthony Bedingfield³⁹ was at West Grinstead in 1733 and 1734. The English Province accounts record the payment to Philip Carteret of 8s. for his expenses to West Grinstead in March 1735/6.⁴⁰ Fr. Carteret later moved to Slindon, another mission in the county that was served by the Jesuit fathers, as chaplain to the Kempe family.⁴¹ Another volume of Province accounts shows Lady Mary Caryll being paid 6 gns. for Fr. Felix Bartlett in July 1736.⁴² Not until the arrival of Fr. Henry Hoghton in 1736 did the West Grinstead mission have a long-serving pastor.

In 1736 John Caryll, the squire of Ladyholt and friend of Pope, died, and was succeeded by John Baptist Caryll, his grandson (Fig. 2). John's widow, Elizabeth Caryll, moved to West Grinstead with her daughter Catherine, leaving Ladyholt to the young heir. Her arrival at West Grinstead coincided with the start of the chaplaincy of Henry Hoghton. Henry Hoghton, alias More, was born in Cheshire in 1710, and was educated at St. Omer and Valladolid before being ordained in 1735.⁴³ His earliest letter to



Fig. 2. John Baptist Caryll, 1718–88. (Portrait at Priest's House, West Grinstead)

John Baptist Caryll from West Grinstead was dated 20 February 1736/7,⁴⁴ and he remained the priest of the mission until his death in 1750.

THE SALE OF WEST GRINSTEAD HOUSE

The mission was threatened by the financial collapse of the Caryll estates, brought on partly by the penalties the family suffered for its religion. The continual financial burdens enacted against Catholics under the Penal Laws, and the

inability of Catholics to increase their wealth and position by office holding, had brought the family estates to the brink of collapse. It is estimated that their debts totalled over £30,000 between 1746 and 1762.⁴⁵ In December 1744 Fr. Hoghton wrote to John Baptist Caryll:

it has been lately very great concern to me, to hear of the bad state of your affairs, and tho I am forbid by my rules to meddle with temporal affairs, and indeed by my own inclination neither inquisitive, nor desirous of any such thing: yet I can't help hearing what is talk'd of in all company's, nor can I hear it (but) with the utmost concern.⁴⁶

He urged Caryll to sell enough of his estates, starting with the outmost parts, to pay his creditors, and to go into lodgings for a time to save the expense of running Ladyholt.

The sale of outlying parts of the estate and some of the family's French investments did not cover John Baptist Caryll's debts, and he decided to sell West Grinstead House after a number of judgments were obtained against him in the courts of King's Bench and Common Pleas. He entered into negotiations with the Burrell family, and asked Henry Hoghton to break the news to the family at West Grinstead.

You will easily imagine yt it was no small grief to all concerned and your grandmother could not refrain from some tears. Notwithstanding she desires me to assure you yt she is much obliged to you for being mindful of her staying here as long as she lives,

Fr. Hoghton wrote to Caryll in an undated letter. John Baptist Caryll and Merrick Burrell apparently agreed terms for the sale of West Grinstead manor and estate subject to Elizabeth Caryll being able to live in West Grinstead House until her death, but clearly future provision would have to be found for the chaplain and the chapel once the house was sold. Fr. Hoghton's letter continued:

as to the school and chapel in case of a sale, I don't know how it can possibly subsist there not being as I know of (and I think I know them all) one House upon ye Knep estate proper for such a use, besides ye Difficulty there will be of setting such a thing in a parish where it never was before and not under ye immediate

eye of a powerful Patron to protect it. It has been often looked at with an evil eye where it now is and had it not been for ye influence of your most worthy Family upon ye Parson and Parish I imagine it could not have subsisted so long as it has done. Wt will then become of it when left in a place where you have no Mansion House, and consequently where your presence can not be so frequent as it has been? Ye consequences of this are much to be feared. But if necessity obliges you to it, I hope you will in time think of making a proper provision, and not endangering the loss of both.⁴⁷

John Baptist Caryll sold West Grinstead House to Merrik Burrell on 5 December 1749,⁴⁸ but, as agreed, Elizabeth Caryll continued to occupy the house, and she continued to hold courts as lady of the manor of Knepp until her death.⁴⁹ Fr. Hoghton died before the estate changed hands, and he was buried at West Grinstead on 11 July 1750.⁵⁰ He was succeeded by Francis Short, a young Jesuit of 32, who had been ordained four years earlier, and who was to serve the mission for the next four years.⁵¹ John Baptist Caryll's grandmother died in 1754, and with the death of Elizabeth Caryll, West Grinstead House finally passed into the hands of the Burrell family.⁵² On 14 May 1754 Catherine Caryll, who had shared the house with her mother, described the break-up of the Chapel:

Mr. Burrell I suppose will buy the best Church stuff. Tabernacle steps &c. shall be pack'd up ready for ye sending for as you propos'd when here, and all the books belonging to the house in the P(ri)ivate Closet shall be put into one of the Garretts lock'd up, ye Closett being soon to be lay'd open as ye other wing of the side has been . . . I have sent by Mr. L. the two Cruetts you bought, wch have never been used since poor Mr. Houghton's time, and the lid of one of them broke.⁵³

EDWARD CARYLL AND THE CHAPEL AT HIGHDEN

When John Baptist Caryll sold West Grinstead House to Merrik Burrell, the chapel was closed and the priest had to find somewhere else to live. Edward Caryll, uncle to John Baptist Caryll, lost his wife at this time and was left a childless widower. He purchased a house at Highden in Washington, now Windlesham

House School, for himself and for his sister Catherine, who had been made homeless by the sale of West Grinstead. It seems clear that Edward Caryll regarded Francis Short as his own chaplain after John Baptist Caryll had disposed of West Grinstead, and that he established a chapel in his own house at Highden. Francis Short lived with him at Highden but continued to look after the spiritual welfare of the mission around West Grinstead. His letters to John Baptist Caryll are few, and date from the end of his stay. On 5 April 1754 he wrote from Highden:

As to the things that belong to the Chappell, we beg to know what house at Grinstead you would have 'em sent to, & fix on for a Chappell, for if you intend to keep one there, a Chalice, Ciborium, Vestments and the like, will be wanted. As to myself, being, as far as I understand, otherwise dispos'd of by my Superiors, I can assist the Poor People no longer than Easter Week, so hope you'll be so good as to take that affair to heart, it being high time to think of giving them some assistance in these their abandoned circumstances.⁵⁴

Edward Caryll was determined to do something about the situation, for as Highden was well away from the Catholic community at West Grinstead, he felt some responsibility for serving the people of the old mission. On 9 April 1754, he wrote to his nephew, John Baptist Caryll, from Highden:

since Mr. Short wrote to you, I have determined to stay here at this place, which I more willingly acquaint you soon of, as it may make you the more easy to the Poor People at Grinstead . . . I make no doubt but you will contribute something towards the Priest, I mean his salary, for I shall give him his board &c.⁵⁵

On 14 May 1754 he again wrote from Highden, and gave the first news of the end of the Jesuit mission after some 50 years:

Mr. Short is ordered away by the good Fathers, and is order'd or rather named for Slindon, before I could have been provided of one⁵⁶ . . . I have apply'd to the Good Friars for one, and have had a very civil genteel letter from the Provincial which I will shew you when we meet; or rather when you come hither. I hope that it will not be long before I shall be supplied with one, will not enlarge on this subject, I imagine you understand me.⁵⁷

Slindon, near Chichester in the western half of the county, had been a mission served by the Jesuits since the 1680s,⁵⁸ and Edward Caryll revealed the reason for Fr. Short's new posting in the same letter. 'Poor Mr. Norris,' he wrote of the Jesuit chaplain at Slindon, 'is dead, and is to be buried this day at Slindon'.

Edward Caryll clearly knew the Franciscans before he offered the mission to them. Among the books in the Franciscan library at Forest Gate, is a breviary printed in Antwerp in 1668, which is inscribed:

ex dono D(omi)ni Eduardi Caryll die Aprilis Vicesima
1749. Hic Liber assignatus est ad usum Fr. Anthony a
S^{to} Bonaventura Provinciae Angliae Fratrum
Minorum.⁵⁹

Soon after the chapel at West Grinstead was broken up, Edward Caryll completed negotiations with the Franciscans to replace the Jesuits as chaplains and to replace the chapel. He wrote to his nephew on 16 June 1754:

I have had a very civil letter from the Superior of the Fryars, who will supply me with one as soon as possible, and as I find that Mr. Short stays here 'till that time, though we did hear that he was order'd to Slindon, and to be ready at a call, yet we do not hear, nor can conceive the meaning, but as for myself, who am the least curious, or political in these affairs in the world, I can very well wait and with christian patience when my honest good man comes. I assure you very faithfully that I never kept him, and indeed to own an humble truth never once thought of him or any of his Brethren, this is between you and I.⁶⁰

PRIEST'S HOUSE, WEST GRINSTEAD

Priest's House, West Grinstead (Fig. 1), is usually described as 'the oldest continuously occupied presbytery in England', and it is stated to have been the site of a chapel either since the Reformation, or since John Caryll's endowment of the mission in 1671. The evidence of the documents makes it clear that the first West Grinstead chapel was in West Grinstead House: at the other major Catholic missions in the county—at Cowdray, Ladyholt, Burton and Slindon—the chapel was always in the house; after all, that was where the priest was resident

and where he was most likely to be safe and private to exercise his ministry. There was certainly a chapel in West Grinstead House (Fig. 3) when the Carylls sold the house to Merrik Burrell in 1754. It is most unlikely that the family supported another house with another chapel only a few hundred yards from the family home. The present 'secret chapel' (Fig. 4) in the attic of Priest's House is the successor to the chapel in West Grinstead House, and was the centre of the mission from 1754 until the building of the church in 1875. Its location in the house has changed. Both in 1851 and 1863 it was situated on the first floor, in order to accommodate the congregation, and it probably remained there until the church was built. At that point the chapel was moved to the attic, but it is not known whether this was a return to its original site in the 18th century, or a move to a fresh location.

Granville Squiers suggested in 1934 that there were at least three priest holes in the building. He wrote that:

one hide is between the mantelpiece and the ceiling of the dining-room . . . It was necessary to climb inside the chimney as high as the ceiling and then drop down through an aperture. Another was in the chimney of the room above and could be got at through the fireplace of that room. The entrance to this hide some way up the flue, can still be seen with the aid of a spotlight torch. Yet another was close to the chimney of the room above, but under the roof. It was accessible from the attic or from a small room underneath. It was perhaps also accessible through the flues, but this is uncertain.⁶¹

The only physical evidence that survives for the existence of these priest holes is some spaces around the central chimney of the house, which are the result of the insertion of a brick chimney-breast with four flues in the middle of an existing timber-framed house when it was enlarged in the 18th century. The enlargement of the house possibly took place when West Grinstead House was lost to the Caryll family. There is no documentary evidence. But then why should there be priest holes at West Grinstead, and why at Priest's House, when there is no evidence to suggest that the house was in Catholic hands between 1580 and 1610, the period during which

priest holes were constructed, and no evidence that there were then any priests in West Grinstead to hide?

Priest's House probably first became associated with the Catholic mission at West Grinstead after West Grinstead House had been sold and the missioner and the chapel had moved to Highden. In spite of his problems with Fr. Short and the Jesuits and the imminent arrival of his first Franciscan chaplain at Highden, Edward Caryll wrote to his nephew on 18 August 1754 with a suggestion about establishing a new chapel at West Grinstead:

Give me leave to put you in mind of one thing, which is, that if you think it convenient (which I believe you will)

to buy Phill Millenton's house where his mother now lives, for ye sake of ye Poor People they are so many invalides of both sexes that they cannot come hither, it will make a chapell of ease and be very convenient to him who I expect every day; and indeed do expect to hear every post. 'Tis not enough to say, I will (if it pleases God) but we must try and do all we can to help these Poor People, for if a cup of cold water has its effect, what will the other amount to? I cannot do this and ye other, viz., of keeping one here his sallery etc., and then to maintain one at Grinstead, or in the precincts: this is above my strength.⁶²

By October nothing had been settled, and on 26 October Edward Caryll wrote again:

I expect my Frier here against All Saints, he is just come from Douay, never was in the mission, and am well inform'd will answer every way. We will talk about his



Fig. 3. West Grinstead House, the seat of the Caryll family and the centre of the mission between 1671 and 1754.
(By permission of the British Library)

pension &c.; and (I) will put you to the least charge as possible: though I am at some myself, as you must needs imagine.⁶³

A month later Edward Caryll reported that the furnishings of the old West Grinstead chapel had been sent to Slindon,⁶⁴ and on 14 December 1754 he wrote his final word on the Jesuit mission in a letter to John Baptist Caryll:

And one more thing, which is, that if you can spare to send me an indifferent alb, when you send for these things, here, I can scarce make mine hold out, 'till I can

get another: a surplice I have but one, and if I am not mistaken Short carried one from hence to Grinstead, and perhaps has carried that away too with him, as he has several other things, which I am credibly informed, and I inform you of one, of the desk, or priedieu: to be short I am very glad I got rid of him and them, and so be it. I imagine that you thoroughly understand me, *verbum sat sapienti*.⁶⁵

Fr. Short stayed at Slindon for only one year before moving again to the Jesuit mission at Soberton in Hampshire, where he died on 9 November 1755.



Fig. 4. The 'secret chapel' at Priest's House, West Grinstead.

THE FRANCISCAN MISSION

Fr. Placid Payne alias Duvivier was the first Franciscan to be appointed to serve the mission, and he and his confrères remained as chaplains until 1815. Presumably Edward Caryll and John Baptist Caryll had reached an agreement about financing the mission, because although Fr. Payne seems to have spent some of his time living at Highden with Edward Caryll, he petitioned his Franciscan superiors for help in furnishing the Priest's House, and was allowed £18 for the purpose, provided he submitted an account and a list of purchases to the Procurator of the English Province of Friars Minor.⁶⁶ Unfortunately the account has not survived. There is a persistent tradition at West Grinstead that Priest's House was enlarged and the stone was brought from the old chapel at West Grinstead House. The date for the enlargement is variously given as 1630 and 1671, when John Caryll's endowment was made. The architectural evidence does not support such a belief and there is no documentary evidence. However, there is often a germ of truth in persistent traditions, and it is possible that, when the mission was centred on Priest's House after 1754, some stones were used from West Grinstead House. Catherine Caryll, when describing the break-up of the old chapel in the house in 1754, mentioned that the closet was 'soon to be lay'd open as ye other wing of the side had been'.⁶⁷

Edward Caryll suggested in letters at the beginning of the 1760s that two chapels were still in use at that time—one at West Grinstead and one at Highden. Fr. Felix Englefield's notebook⁶⁸ includes a list of 'Residences of our Gentlemen in 1758', which places Fr. Hoghton at West Grinstead, and Placid Payne at Highden as chaplain to Edward Caryll. Although Henry Hoghton had been dead for several years, it suggests that the two missions were regarded as separate at the time. It is clear, however, from an acrimonious exchange between Fr. Payne and John Baptist Caryll at the time of the latter's second marriage in 1761, that the precise financial arrangements for supporting the two chapels

were still not decided. Fr. Payne wrote:

if you look on my living at West Grinstead partly at yr. cost as a very great favour you will pardon me Sir if I am of a very different sentiment: for I certainly had a right to a maintenance (God knows it was a poor one enough) but from whom was I to acquire it? unless from the person who before Mr. Houghton went thither own'd himself obliged to procure a priest for those poor people, if he was able. Did you not say Sir these very words in the parlour at Highden? you was obliged to your Uncle for drawing that thorn out of your foot! It is true since that time you have altered your mind.⁶⁹

It seems that Fr. Payne did not devote his time exclusively to the West Grinstead mission, though he seems to have supplied a priest to take his place when he was away. Edward Caryll told his nephew on 2 July 1760:

I found Mr. Payne here (at Highden), not my old man, one may suppose before Sunday then it is to be hoped that he has done jaunting, at least for some considerable time. I am obliged to Mr. Payne his coming to my little family and his staying here, which is a great help to them.⁷⁰

But although he was grateful to Fr. Payne, he clearly was exasperated by his temporary replacement. On 21 July 1760 he complained to John Baptist Caryll:

Mr. Beaumont going into your country without acquainting me (as he is always in a vaste hurry) gave me no time or even notice of his going without desiring him to give my compliments . . . one would swear he never lived in a gentleman's family, nor do I think is hardly so himself.⁷¹

EDWARD CARYLL'S NEW ENDOWMENT OF THE MISSION

During Placid Payne's time on the mission, Edward Caryll made a new endowment to safeguard the future of the Catholics in the area, since he and his nephew had failed to agree since the sale of the West Grinstead estates. John Baptist Caryll, who was a spendthrift, seems to have avoided all responsibility for the Catholics in West Grinstead after he sold his house in the parish. Bishop Challoner, Vicar Apostolic of the London District and head of the Church in England, was obliged to remind him on several

occasions to honour the 'pious intentions' of his ancestors.⁷² By contrast, Edward Caryll was most active in promoting the Church's interest. Fr. Felix Englefield recorded that

Mr. Edward Caryll made a foundation at this time for one of ours to serve the Poor Catholics at West Grinstead, wch place formerly belonged to yt noble family, and for which he gave the sum of thirteen hundred pounds; wch gift and donation was accepted by our Chapter in July 1758. And in which in gratitude for so great a charity it was order'd that at his death there should be a solemn High Mass and Dirge with all ye Masses of the day performed at Douay⁷³ and 500 Masses discharged by our missionaries as the R(everend) F(ather) Provincial for the time being should appoint. That this anniversary should be kept and a weekly Mass performed by the incumbent, as well as nine anniversaries for his relations wch will be specified in the proper places of obligation.⁷⁴

He added a note that Edward Caryll was to have the use of the money during his lifetime, and that £100 of it should be used for the purchase of the mission place in case it should be sold.

The Franciscan Chapter register records that at a Chapter held in London on 16 July 1758, the Friars were given permission to accept the legacy offered by 'nobili Domino Eduardo Caryll pro fundatione sustentationis missionarii ex nostris patribus pro Vico West Grinstead'.⁷⁵ As a result of the promises of masses recorded in Felix Englefield's notebook, the priest at West Grinstead was obliged to say 62 masses annually. These masses were one every week for Edward Caryll the benefactor and founder of the new mission and one extra mass, and one mass a year on the anniversaries of John Caryll and Elizabeth Caryll, his father and mother; Catherine Caryll, his wife; John Caryll junior, Henry Caryll and Richard Caryll, his brothers; and Nathaniel, Ralph and Rebecca Pigott, relatives of his wife.⁷⁶ In 1776 this obligation was reduced to 30 masses a year. Edward Caryll's endowment was an unusual one: missions were usually endowed at houses of the Catholic gentry and aristocracy, but his foundation was restricted to the poor Catholics in the neighbourhood of West Grinstead.⁷⁷

In 1763 Edward Caryll sold his house at

Highden and went to live at Compton near his nephew at Ladyholt. Fr. Payne's period of chaplaincy also came to an end, and it seems that the chapel at Highden was closed down at this date. Edward Caryll wrote from Highden to John Baptist Caryll on 11 July 1763:

I can not let Mr. Payne go from hence with troubling you with these few lines, which are, how shall we dispose of these old goods that are in the house; I believe that it will be better to get rid of them all at once, to have a faithful appraiser that understands the affair. I may with some difficulty find out such an one As for the Chapel furniture I shall dispose of them to Grinstead, what belongs to me, and I may presume that you will do the same.⁷⁸

THE FRANCISCAN MISSION CONTINUED

John Baptist Caryll clearly still made some financial contribution to the mission, because when Placid Payne left West Grinstead, Fr. Baker, the Franciscan Provincial, introduced his successor to him, writing:

I take the liberty to address this to you with my most humble Respects and should have done it sooner as also to return you my grateful acknowledgements for your generous and charitable contribution towards our gentlemen who serve the Congregation at West Grinstead. This I confess I ought to have done before now, but hope my desire to fix a good gentleman who should not be removed (*sic*). I am sensible of the convenience of not having one fixed, and as Mr. Beaumont was only sent there to supply for a time, am glad I can now inform you that I have sent, I believe, a very proper person, a gentleman who is very capable, and one very desirous to discharge as he ought the Duties of his state and to help his neighbour especially the poor. He has been many years in the mission. His name is Dixon and lately lived with Lord Montague.⁷⁹ I sent to him to repair to West Grinstead and to serve the people there, as I have good reason to believe he will be very acceptable to that Congregation, I hope this my sending him there will meet with your approbation.⁸⁰

Armed with this glowing reference, Fr. Paul Dixon remained chaplain to the congregation at West Grinstead for the next five years. During his chaplaincy John Baptist Caryll was finally forced by his ever increasing debts to sell Ladyholt and the remainder of his Sussex estates in 1767. For a short time he lived at Brockhampton

in Havant, before travelling abroad, where he died in 1788. John Baptist Caryl was the last of the line in Sussex, and his departure abroad meant the end of the family connection with the West Grinstead mission. The family archives close with his death, and a vital source for the history of the mission comes to an end.

Anselm Copley followed Paul Dixon at West Grinstead in 1768. The Franciscan Procurator's book records that he received £21 half yearly in 1773 for serving the mission.⁸¹ It also reveals that he received £4 in July 1774 for the repair of a wall at Priest's House, and £2 in September 1744 for a maid. Something of the life of the mission led by Anselm Copley and his Franciscan successors can be gleaned from the diary of John Baker of Horsham, written in a curious mixture of English, shorthand and foreign languages.⁸² Baker, a wealthy merchant, though not himself a Catholic, encouraged his Catholic wife to practise her religion, and to keep Catholic servants, and he recorded precious details of the human side of the West Grinstead mission. From the diary we learn that Fr. Anselm Copley was often a sick man. Baker recorded on 6 September 1772:

uxor showed me the size and shape (in bread) of a prodigious large stone Mr. Copley voided there this week, as he did another considerable One.⁸³

Mrs. Martin, the Bakers' housekeeper, often took food parcels to Fr. Copley when he was sick. On 2 July 1774:

Mrs. Martin seule to W. Grinstead: carried Mr. Copley 2 bottles Rum, a chicken and about 6 pounds of barrel sugar.⁸⁴

On 11 December 1774:

Mrs. Martin in chariot to Mr. Copley's, Mrs. Peters with her (but Mr. Copley too bad to say prayers as she knew) carried him 2 bottles Madeira wine, 2 of rum and (blank). Mrs. Martin came back before three, said Mr. Copley had dropsy.⁸⁵

The two women had clearly travelled to West Grinstead in the hope of hearing mass: prayers

being the 18th-century Catholic word for the sacrifice which was still against the law, which provided penalties both for the celebrant and the congregation. Again on 10 February 1775 John Baker recorded, 'Mrs. Martin went at 8 to Mr. Copley's (prêtre from Reigate là)⁸⁶ Mr. Copley very ill in bed'.⁸⁷

In spite of his poor health, Fr. Copley is recorded as saying mass regularly at West Grinstead, which several of John Baker's servants attended each week. He gave extreme unction to Mrs. Baker on 18 March 1774,⁸⁸ and often engaged in religious argument with non-Catholics. He was on terms of social equality with John Baker, who recorded travelling to West Grinstead in a 'chariot' on 12 April 1774 to walk with Fr. Copley in his garden at Priest's House, and, when he left, he lent Copley 'last mo(nths) 2 Reviews and Gent. and London Magazines'.⁸⁹

In June 1776 Fr. Copley was summoned back to St. Bonaventure's Friary at Douai, presumably because of his health, but not before he had introduced his successor to the Bakers. The Diary records on 20 June 1776:

afternoon came Mr. Copley and the new priest Mr. Fleet (a native of London—has been some years on the mission in Lancashire) to supply his place;

and, on the following day: 'Mr. Copley in stage today to London in order to go to his College at Douai'.⁹⁰ Anselm Copley did not enjoy a long retirement, and died at St. Bonaventure's in the following year.

William Fleet was a man of very different character, and his stay at West Grinstead was short. At first he was welcomed by the Baker family, and John Baker's diary records several visits the priest made to Mrs. Martin. He also took part in games with Baker, playing bowls on 6 August 1776 and several games of draughts on the following day. But his argumentative nature soon gave offence, and he was recalled to London by his Franciscan superiors. Again the diary tells the story. On 6 August John Baker wrote that 'Mr. Fleet came (to the Assizes at Horsham)

to hear some trials; said was never at court in his life',⁹¹ but six weeks later he added, 'Mrs. Martin said Mr. Fleet had given some offence at Assizes by saying he could not see for ladies high heads'.⁹² However, it was probably his argument with the local Methodist minister that caused his removal. On 3 September John Baker wrote:

Charles told me Mr. Fleet chez nous on Domingo, sent for to London ou to go on lundi, fears shall be forced to go abroad to a nunnery which he has no gusto—will try to revenir . . . Mrs. Martin told me of a fracas between Mr. (Fleet) and Mann, the Methodist preacher,⁹³ and others, last Sunday night, at Methodists meeting, and their going to Sir Charles Eversfield for a warrant. Mr. Fleet went away to London about ii last monday, having lodged here the night before. Our Charles Lewis was with him at the Methodist's meeting on Sunday evening when the thing happened.⁹⁴

After the excitement caused by William Fleet's short chaplaincy, the mission settled down again under John Bonaventure Pelling. Like his predecessors he soon made himself known to the Bakers.

Hearing somebody knock at the door near 5pm., I went and opened it and found it was a man who asked for Mrs. Martin; I suspected it was one come to supply Mr. Fleet's place, and it was so, Mr. Pilling, just come from Douay, where he has been for 25 years.⁹⁵

the diarist recorded on 10 September 1776. Within a month Fr. Pelling had brought down his sister from Preston to keep house with him at Priest's House, and soon he and his sister were entertaining the Bakers' higher servants after Sunday mass, or being received at Horsham. John Baker lent the Franciscan the four volumes of Chesterfield's letters, and partnered him in rubbers of whist against his neighbours the Woodwards, while Mrs. Martin took to West Grinstead the familiar food parcels, this time of

two bottles red and one white currant wine, two china pots of currant jelly—to keep pots, one pot green apricocks and one pot of preserved do.⁹⁶

Fr. John Pelling was succeeded by William Knight, who signed the West Grinstead registers between 1778 and 1784. While at West Grinstead

he also said mass on the first Sunday of each month at Roffey near Horsham, and for this he received an allowance from the Weston Fund paid half-yearly by Mr. Winter Taylor of St. James's Street.⁹⁷ He was described as 'now resident at West Grinstead' in July 1781, when he received a bequest of £50 under the will of Martha Bullock, one of his parishioners.⁹⁸ Fr. Knight was appointed Martha Bullock's sole heir and executor, and was bequeathed the sole profit and emolument under the will during his natural life. Like John Pelling, William Knight went on to become Provincial of his order in England,⁹⁹ and was succeeded by Fr. Thomas Cotterell, a Birmingham friar, who signed the registers between 1781 and 1812. In 1796 Fr. Bernard Collingridge described his address as being 'Cotterell, West Grinstead, Horsham'.¹⁰⁰

The last Franciscan chaplain at West Grinstead was Fr. Charles McDonnell, who served the mission from 1812 to 1814. Among the Franciscan archives are letters to Fr. McDonnell at West Grinstead from Bernard Collingridge, Vicar Apostolic of the Western District, enclosing a decree from Propaganda in Rome appointing him coadjutor to the Vicar Apostolic with the likelihood of succession, and from his brother, Daniel McDonnell, a priest at the London Road chapel in St. George's Fields, promising the visit of

some great Personage at so attractive a place as West Grinstead. It is now ascertained beyond doubt that the illustrious Daniel McDonnell intends honouring your neighbourhood and particularly yourself and mansion with a visit very early in the ensuing week. He may be expected to alight at the Burrell Hotel.¹⁰¹

Charles McDonnell refused the mitre, and joined his brother at St. George's, and with his departure the Franciscan chaplaincy at West Grinstead came to an end.

THE SCHOOL

In 1727 the rector of West Grinstead presented amongst other papists in the parish 'Mrs. Hay (as they call her) Schoolm(istres)s to Popish

children'.¹⁰² Mrs. Hayes, as she was usually called, was financed by the Caryll family to teach the Catholic children of the parish, as Fr. Henry Hoghton made clear in an undated letter to John Baptist Caryll reminding him of his responsibilities. He wrote:

I hope you will think of helping Madame Hayes, the pious schoolmistress, who spends her life teaching the poor children of West Grinstead and has always been with the Caryll family. Her needs are very great. For 2 years she has received nothing and if there was not enough in the house for 2 or 3 she could not live.¹⁰³

Mrs. Hayes may have received some financial support from Lady Petre, the benefactress of the Catholic schools in Essex, and a close relative of the Carylls; Miss Mary Kinoulty discovered an entry in the Caryll family accounts dated 4 August 1733 reading 'To Mrs. Hays. Lady Petre's Ch: End L. day 02:10:00'.¹⁰⁴

In spite of these two sources of income, Mrs. Hayes was regularly in debt as a result of John Baptist Caryll's failure to pay her regular salary. In 1754, Fr. Francis Short reminded him that

Mrs. Hayes's salary becomes due on Lady Day. As she now depends entirely on your goodness and charity, she hopes you will be so good as to send her an order for the money, to prevent the many miseries she must otherwise necessarily fall into. The rent of the house she is in, & in which she still continues to teach, is five and forty shillings a year, the Cheapest to be come at; and if not paid when due, Mrs. Hopkins will infallibly turn her out of Doors.¹⁰⁵

When Fr. Short's letter had received no reply after a month, Elizabeth Hayes wrote to John Baptist Caryll herself requesting the payment of her salary of £10 per annum.¹⁰⁶ A few months later Catherine Caryll reported Mrs. Hayes's sudden death to her brother:

The cause of my writing to you now is to acquaint you with poor Mrs. Hayes's death, of which Mr. Payne brought me the melancholy account of last thursday at his return from Grinstead.¹⁰⁷

Mrs. Hayes's death did not mark the end of the school, however, and Catherine Caryll recommended

her poor servant Kitty Flutter who had lived with her many years, on very small wages . . . & indeed latterly since she (Mrs. Hayes) grew so infirm ye cheif support of the School, w(hi)ch they all say she is capable enough of.¹⁰⁸

Her brother evidently agreed to the suggestion, because in December 1754 Catherine Caryll wrote to say that she had

told Kitty Flutter w(ha)t you was pleased to mention about her keeping on the school on the same footing that Mrs. (Hayes) had it before.¹⁰⁹

The change of teacher did not mean that John Baptist Caryll was any more forthcoming with the salary. Kitty Flutter wrote in 1758 to say that her salary was two years overdue and that she was 'in great Necessity';¹¹⁰ Edward Caryll wrote on her behalf in February 1758 to ask if his nephew would 'be pleased to continue her allowance, her time is almost out';¹¹¹ and Kitty Flutter wrote again in March 1759 to claim her £10 salary.¹¹² No more was heard of the school after this date, and it seems likely that it closed before the last of the Carylls left England for France in 1767.

West Grinstead Catholics, in spite of the irregular history of their school, were not cut off from the mainstream of Catholic education. Blaise Morey, who was born in West Grinstead in 1744, was at Sedgley Park School near Wolverhampton in 1763, the very year of its foundation by Bishop Challoner,¹¹³ and continued his education at the English College at Douai¹¹⁴ until his ordination to the priesthood. At some later date a school was built behind the Priest's House for the Catholic children of the mission, but again it did not prosper. Mgr. Denis described it as

a small building at the back of the house, of which the extent is 21 yards square. The school room . . . receives light through a large window and a half glass door. The floor is made with stone, and its ceiling with a ventilator in the middle is quite new . . . Not a farthing is given for the school.¹¹⁵

It was not in use when he arrived in the parish in 1863, but he soon reopened it.

THE FINANCES OF THE MISSION

Serenus Cressy, the first chaplain at West Grinstead to benefit from John Caryll's endowment of 1671, received an income of £12 a year from the £600 invested with the Chapter. The usual remuneration for a domestic chaplain in the first half of the 18th century was £20 per annum. The Caryll family accounts show that their chaplains Henry Molyneux, S.J., at Ladyholt and John Massey at West Grinstead received the standard salary in 1726 and 1727.¹¹⁶ This income was certainly supplemented by *ex-gratia* payments for charity and the supply of all requisites for the chapel by the family. The Jesuit Province accounts show that Fr. Henry Hoghton received an annual payment of £3 from his superiors on 14 December each year.¹¹⁷ He also received financial help from his congregation: in the will of John Pierce of West Grinstead, for example, he was left 3 gns., 'his silver spurs, the housing and holster caps'.¹¹⁸

Fr. Felix Englefield calculated the income of the mission in the 1750s, as being

at present about £32 all by the subscription of different persons, but at Edward Caryll's death there will be the interest of £1200 or £1300.¹¹⁹

After Edward Caryll's new endowment in 1758, the Franciscan missionaries seem to have received an income of £42 a year. The Procurator's book records that Fr. Anselm Copley received £21 half-yearly in 1773,¹²⁰ and Fr. John Pelling revealed that 'I was paid £2 to liquidate Fleet's debts from his £21 half yearly salary', in 1776.¹²¹ By the end of the century the income of the mission had increased, and the Procurator's book reveals that

by balancing these accounts it will appear that Mr. Cottrell received from the beginning of (17)94 to the end of (17)95 the sum of £139, while during the above period his salary was only for the two years £129.¹²²

However, the income of the mission was not sufficient to prevent at least two of the Franciscans from leaving debts at West Grinstead. Fr. Anselm Copley left a debt of £10 10s. in 1776

after three years at the mission,¹²³ and his successor William Fleet accumulated a debt of £21 during his stay there of only two and a half months.¹²⁴

The endowment of the mission was increased in 1808 by a bequest in the will of Richard Batchelor, whose family filled the West Grinstead registers during the period of the Franciscan chaplaincy. The second clause of his will reads:

I give and bequeath towards the support and maintenance of the Roman Catholic Chapel in the parish of West Grinstead aforesaid the sum of two hundred pounds to be placed out at interest on such security as my executors shall think proper, the interest arising from the same to be paid half yearly to the Priest of the aforesaid Chapel on condition that twenty masses be annually discharged for the repose of my soul.¹²⁵

By 1814 the income of the West Grinstead mission was £80 a year.¹²⁶ When Mgr. Denis took over in 1863 he found that

the chief income of the West Grinstead mission is a hundred and ten pounds a year, of which £42 comes from a foundation made by Edward Caryll; £9 from another foundation made by Richard Batchelor; £30 are given by Mr. Heathcote; and the rest is supplied by his Lordship the Revd. Doctor Grant.¹²⁷

THE CONGREGATION

There are no records of any West Grinstead Catholics being presented for recusancy in the early part of the 17th century, and as late as 1676 the rector of West Grinstead was able to report that there were no people in the parish who refused to receive communion. The provision of a priest to serve the mission by John Caryll in 1671 soon transformed the situation. Sixteen recusants were listed in the parish in 1685,¹²⁸ and Bishop Bowers' visitation of 1724 listed 14 papist families out of about 106.¹²⁹ Three years later John Woodford, a later rector of West Grinstead, returned a detailed list of the Catholic congregation to the diocesan authorities.¹³⁰ He listed 52 Catholics: 28 adults and 24 children in 18 households, including Fr. John Massey, the Jesuit chaplain of the mission, and Elizabeth

Hayes, the Catholic schoolmistress. Bishop Challoner visited Sussex three times. In 1741 he found '150 Catholics, two-thirds of whom were communicants',¹³¹ at West Grinstead, but he was recording the congregation of the whole mission rather than the number of Catholics in the Church of England parish. In 1749 he found 140 Catholics,¹³² and in 1753 110.¹³³

The Carylls had left West Grinstead before the next estimate of the size of the congregation was made, but, contrary to expectation, the removal of their Catholic patron did not cause numbers to decrease. The 1767 House of Lords returns¹³⁴ still recorded 30 papists in West Grinstead, of whom 11 were adult males, 12 females and 7 children, and the 1773 returns in the Westminster Diocesan Archives with the figures provided for Bishop Challoner's report to Rome by his coadjutor, James Talbot,¹³⁵ give a total of 100 Catholics for the mission. Eight years later a return of recusants in West Grinstead¹³⁶ lists 42 Catholics out of a population of 417.

In both 1767 and 1780 half of the Catholic population of the main mission area lived in West Grinstead parish. Most of the rest lived in adjoining parishes; 45 per cent in 1767 and 38 per cent in 1780. Some fluctuations took place within these parishes. Shipley, for example, with its long tradition of recusancy, had the second largest Catholic population in 1767, but was overtaken by Nuthurst in 1780. Numbers were so small, however, that the removal of a few families from a parish could account for the change. At any rate the overall pattern remained constant. The outlying parishes of Henfield, Steyning and Washington accounted for only six and a half per cent of the mission population in 1767, and five and a half per cent in 1780. The most distant parish, Washington, in spite of being the site of the former chapel at Highden until 1763, had apparently lost its sole Catholic inhabitant by 1780, although it was only five miles away from the centre of the mission.¹³⁷

Fr. Charles McDonnell, writing to Bishop Poynter in 1814, gave the size of the congregation as '43, none of whom were of gentry rank'.¹³⁸

The 1851 Religious Census shows that the average attendance at the chapel at Priest's House for the Sunday morning mass was 55, and 35 for the evening service.¹³⁹ Mgr. Denis in 1863 wrote:

it is impossible to say how many inhabitants are within the limits of this mission, but I should think that they may be about 20,000, and of this number there may be a hundred Catholics.¹⁴⁰

The figures given for the mission congregation by Bishops Challoner, Talbot and Poynter are supported by the numbers confirmed at West Grinstead at various times. Bishop Challoner confirmed 41 in 1741;¹⁴¹ Bishop Talbot 24 in 1784; Bishop Douglas 33 in 1805; and Bishop Poynter confirmed two West Grinstead people at Brighton in September 1823 and 19 at Horsham four weeks later.¹⁴² As the bishops also confirmed people at the other main Catholic centres in the county, the numbers from the West Grinstead mission were not increased by the presence of other Catholics from outside the mission. It seems clear that the congregation at West Grinstead was smaller only than that at Midhurst and Easebourne among Catholic communities in Sussex, being larger than those at Arundel, Burton, Ladyholt and Slindon, and considerably more numerous than those at Horsham and Treyford.

MGR. DENIS AND WEST GRINSTEAD CHURCH

West Grinstead is one of only five Catholic communities in Sussex that have survived from the 18th century. It is important as being the only such survivor in the county east of the river Arun. It is unique in having survived without any powerful Catholic patron to support it after 1754. The other Caryll family mission in Harting did not survive the sale of Ladyholt in 1767 and the death of Thomas Hunt, the last chaplain, in 1770. From the departure of the Franciscans in 1814 down to the present day, the mission and later the Catholic parish of West Grinstead has been served by the secular clergy. But it is entirely

due to the devoted labour of successive Benedictine, Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries, and to the benefactions of John Caryll in 1671 and Edward Caryll in 1758, that there was a Catholic community in West Grinstead to welcome Mgr. Denis in 1863. When he built the present church of Our Lady of Consolation and St. Francis at West Grinstead in 1875, Mgr. Denis fulfilled the

work of the Carylls, the priests who had served the mission, and the Catholics of the area who had kept their faith alive since penal times. And it is thanks to the great revival of Catholicism in the parish encouraged by Mgr. Denis that there are such fine ecclesiastical buildings to welcome the traveller on the B 2135.¹⁴³

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Notes

Extracts from manuscripts in the British Library Department of Manuscripts are quoted by permission of the British Library Board. The following abbreviations are used:

A.A.W.: Archives of the Archdiocese of Westminster, Archbishop's House, Westminster; A.D.A.B.: Archives of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, Bishop's House, Hove; A.E.P.O.F.M.: Archives of the English Province of the Order of Friars Minor, Forest Gate, London; A.E.P.S.J.: Archives of the English Province of the Society of Jesus, Farm Street, London; B.L.: British Library; H.L.R.O.: House of Lords Record Office; P.R.O.: Public Record Office; W.S.R.O.: West Sussex Record Office.

- ¹ A.D.A.B., Southwark Visitation, 1863/4, West Grinstead.
- ² For the Caryll family, see Max de Trenqualéon, *West Grinstead et les Caryll* (2 vols. 1893); Irene Hernaman, *West Grinstead and our Sussex Forefathers* (1924); Ann Parry, *The Carylls of Harting: A Study in Loyalty* (Harting, 1976).
- ³ W.S.R.O., Ep. I/37/1, and P.R.O., SP 12/117/15, printed in *Miscellanea XIII* (Catholic Rec. Soc. 22), 81.
- ⁴ At least 8 Catholics in the 1620s (W.S.R.O., Ep. I/15/1, of 1624–8); 40 in 1676 (*Suss. Arch. Coll.* 45 (1902), 147); 18 in 1685 (Hist. MSS. Com. 38, *Round*, 275); 5 families in 1724 (W.S.R.O., Ep. I/26/3, p.17); and 16 in 1767 (H.L.R.O., Main Papers, 21 Dec. 1767).
- ⁵ B.L., Add. MS. 39368, f. 731.
- ⁶ *Suss. Arch. Coll.* 19 (1867), 112–13; *Calendar of the Committee for Compounding*, 3, pp. 2278–9, 2282.
- ⁷ P.R.O., E 179/258/14, ff. 23–4.
- ⁸ See Howard Erskine Hill, 'John Caryll, 2nd Baron Caryll of Durford, 1667–1736', in *The Social Milieu of Alexander Pope* (1975), 42–102.
- ⁹ W.S.R.O., Ep. I/37/3.
- ¹⁰ Hernaman, *West Grinstead*, 79.
- ¹¹ See for example, Hernaman, *West Grinstead*; H.C. Fincham, *The Pilgrims Guide to the Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation at West Grinstead* (1961); Margaret Clifton, *The Church of Our Lady of Consolation and St. Francis West Grinstead: A Short History of the Church and Mission* (1975).
- ¹² W.S.R.O., Ep. I/15/1, of 1626; *Suss. Rec. Soc.* 49, 26, 67, 95, 103, 112; J.S. Cockburn, *Calendar of Assize Records,*

Sussex Indictments, James I (1975).

- ¹³ J.S. Cockburn, *Calendar of Assize Records, Sussex Indictments, Elizabeth I* (1975).
- ¹⁴ *West Sussex Protestation Returns, 1641–1642*, ed. R. Garraway Rice (*Suss. Rec. Soc.* 5), 90–1.
- ¹⁵ W.S.R.O., Ep. I/22/1 (1676).
- ¹⁶ A.A.W., Old Brotherhood Archives, IV/5.
- ¹⁷ A.A.W., Old Brotherhood Archives, IV/6.
- ¹⁸ A.A.W., Old Brotherhood Archives, IV/8.
- ¹⁹ P.R.O., PROB 11/357, f. 77, of 15 July 1678.
- ²⁰ A.A.W., Old Brotherhood Archives, IV/6.
- ²¹ The mission at Havant in Hampshire is the other surviving result of John Caryll's benefaction. See Robert E. Scantlebury, *The Registers and Records of Brockhampton (Havant): Hampshire Registers III* (Catholic Rec. Soc. 44), 2.
- ²² Anthony A'Wood, *Athenae* (1691), 2, 385–8.
- ²³ David Lunn, *The English Benedictines, 1540–1688* (1980), 131–3.
- ²⁴ Douai Abbey, Woolhampton, Berks., Weldon MSS. vol. I, f. 437.
- ²⁵ Gilbert Dolan, 'The English Benedictine Missions: Missions in Kent and Sussex', *Downside Review*, 19 (1900), 164–71.
- ²⁶ H. Norbert Birt, *Obit Book of the English Benedictines from 1600 to 1912* (1913), 57.
- ²⁷ W.S.R.O., Par. 95/1/1/3, f. 37.
- ²⁸ A.A.W., Old Brotherhood Archives, Consult Minutes, pp. 184–5.
- ²⁹ A.A.W., Epis. Var. I, f. 117, printed in *Catholicicon*, 4, 198–201.
- ³⁰ A.A.W., A. 38/4.
- ³¹ The term 'poor people' was used to mean the Catholics of West Grinstead, poor being used in its secondary meaning of 'deserving of pity'.
- ³² A.A.W., Old Brotherhood Archives, Consult Minutes, p. 212.
- ³³ The original registers of West Grinstead are preserved at Priest's House, West Grinstead. A transcript of the register up to 1837 by the present writer is W.S.R.O., MP 2280.
- ³⁴ T.G. Holt, *The English Jesuits, 1650–1829* (Catholic Rec. Soc. 70), 235.

- ³⁵ See F.A. Crisp, *The Catholic Registers of the City of Worcester* (1887).
- ³⁶ Holt, 54.
- ³⁷ Holt, 160.
- ³⁸ W.S.R.O., Ep. 1/37/3.
- ³⁹ Holt, 29.
- ⁴⁰ A.E.P.S.J., English Province Accounts, 1729–65, p. 91.
- ⁴¹ See M.G. Costello, *St. Richards Slindon* (1953).
- ⁴² A.E.P.S.J., English Province Accounts, 1730–5.
- ⁴³ Holt, 123.
- ⁴⁴ B.L., Add. MS. 28229, f. 81.
- ⁴⁵ H.D. Gordon, *A History of Harting* (1877), 201.
- ⁴⁶ B.L., Add. MS. 28230, f. 270.
- ⁴⁷ B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 118.
- ⁴⁸ W.S.R.O., Burrell MSS., calendar of deeds.
- ⁴⁹ W.S.R.O., Add. MS. 13891.
- ⁵⁰ W.S.R.O., Par. 95/1/1/4, f. 135.
- ⁵¹ Holt, 228.
- ⁵² The Harting parish register records that 'Mrs. Caryll, widow of Mr. John Caryll' was buried on 25 Oct. 1753: W.S.R.O., Par. 98/1/1/3, f. 15.
- ⁵³ B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 219.
- ⁵⁴ B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 203.
- ⁵⁵ B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 206.
- ⁵⁶ A priest.
- ⁵⁷ B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 217.
- ⁵⁸ See F.J.A. Skeet (ed.), 'Catholic Registers of Slindon, Sussex, 1698–1840' in *Miscellanea VI* (Catholic Rec. Soc. 7), 353–87.
- ⁵⁹ A.E.P.O.F.M. I am extremely grateful to Fr. Justin McLoughlin, O.F.M., for drawing my attention to many of the Franciscan sources.
- ⁶⁰ B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 219.
- ⁶¹ Granville Squiers, *Secret Hiding Places* (1934), 253–4.
- ⁶² B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 247.
- ⁶³ B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 279.
- ⁶⁴ B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 291.
- ⁶⁵ B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 303.
- ⁶⁶ A.E.P.O.F.M., Procurator's Book, Register 5A.
- ⁶⁷ B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 219.
- ⁶⁸ A.E.P.O.F.M., RS 1, p. 172.
- ⁶⁹ B.L., Add. MS. 28234, f. 412.
- ⁷⁰ B.L., Add. MS. 28235, f. 1.
- ⁷¹ B.L., Add. MS. 28235, f. 30.
- ⁷² For Bishop Challoner's letters to John Baptist Caryll, 1757–63, see B.L., Add. MSS. 28232, ff. 91, 99; 28234, f. 264; 28235, f. 154.
- ⁷³ St. Bonaventure's, the Franciscan House at Douai.
- ⁷⁴ A.E.P.O.F.M., Registrum Particularium Quae acciderunt tempore Provincialitus Fr. Felix Englefield, 1755–8, RS 1, p. 78.
- ⁷⁵ A.E.P.O.F.M., Chapter Register IB, pp. 73–4.
- ⁷⁶ A.E.P.O.F.M., RS 1, p. 149.
- ⁷⁷ See Justin McLoughlin, 'The Friars and West Grinstead', *Southwark Record*, 31 (1957), 8–11.
- ⁷⁸ B.L., Add. MS. 28235, f. 126.
- ⁷⁹ Anthony Browne, 6th Viscount Montague. See H. Wilaert, *History of an Old Catholic Mission: Cowdray—Easebourne—Midhurst* (1928).
- ⁸⁰ B.L., Add. MS. 28234, f. 410.
- ⁸¹ A.E.P.O.F.M., 5A, p. 44.
- ⁸² *Diary of John Baker*, ed. Philip Yorke (1931) (hereafter Baker).
- ⁸³ Baker, 243.
- ⁸⁴ Baker, 290.
- ⁸⁵ Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, 'Mr. John Baker's Horsham Diary', *Suss. Arch. Coll.* 52 (1909), 71.
- ⁸⁶ An unidentified priest, probably the chaplain to Mrs. Melior Mary Weston, a relative of the Carylls, whose family had succeeded the Copleys at Roffey near Horsham and at Gatton near Reigate.
- ⁸⁷ Baker, 302.
- ⁸⁸ Baker, 276.
- ⁸⁹ Baker, 280.
- ⁹⁰ Baker, 357.
- ⁹¹ Baker, 361.
- ⁹² Baker, 367.
- ⁹³ Mann was a Petworth tallow-chandler who had moved to Horsham in 1773 and opened his house to visiting preachers. See Horsham Museum MS. 307; Hilary & John Vickers, *Methodism in a Cathedral City* (Chichester, 1977), 1.
- ⁹⁴ Baker, 366.
- ⁹⁵ Baker, 367.
- ⁹⁶ Baker, 383.
- ⁹⁷ A.E.P.O.F.M., 5A, p. 184.
- ⁹⁸ A.E.P.O.F.M.
- ⁹⁹ See Dominic Bellenger, *English and Welsh Priests, 1558–1800* (1984), 245.
- ¹⁰⁰ A.E.P.O.F.M.
- ¹⁰¹ A.E.P.O.F.M.
- ¹⁰² W.S.R.O., Ep. 1/37/3.
- ¹⁰³ B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 118.
- ¹⁰⁴ B.L., Add. MS. 28241, f. 132.
- ¹⁰⁵ B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 203.
- ¹⁰⁶ B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 216.
- ¹⁰⁷ B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 255.
- ¹⁰⁸ B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 255.
- ¹⁰⁹ B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 258.
- ¹¹⁰ B.L., Add. MS. 28231, f. 294.
- ¹¹¹ B.L., Add. MS. 28232, f. 179.
- ¹¹² B.L., Add. MS. 28232, f. 82.
- ¹¹³ Godfrey Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests, 4, 1716–1800* (1977), 193.
- ¹¹⁴ Mary K. Kinoulty, 'A Social Study of Roman Catholicism in West Sussex in the Eighteenth Century' (Univ. of Wales M.A. thesis, 1982), 239 (copy in W.S.R.O., Add. MS. 34673).
- ¹¹⁵ A.D.A.B., Southwark Visitation, 1863/4, West Grinstead.
- ¹¹⁶ B.L., Add. MS. 28240, ff. 162–4.
- ¹¹⁷ A.E.P.S.J., English Province Accounts, 1729–65, f. 94.
- ¹¹⁸ W.S.R.O., STC I/38, f. 336.
- ¹¹⁹ A.E.P.O.F.M., RS 1, p. 148.
- ¹²⁰ A.E.P.O.F.M., 5A, p. 44.
- ¹²¹ A.E.P.O.F.M., 5A, p. 251.
- ¹²² A.E.P.O.F.M., Procurator's Book, 1779–96, 5B, p. 45.
- ¹²³ A.E.P.O.F.M., 5A, p. 45.
- ¹²⁴ A.E.P.O.F.M., 5A, p. 251.
- ¹²⁵ W.S.R.O., STC I/47, f. 124.
- ¹²⁶ A.A.W., London Clergy Misc. 1812–16 (Poynter) III c. 19.

- ¹²⁷ A.D.A.B., Southwark Visitation, 1863/4, West Grinstead.
¹²⁸ Hist. MSS. Com. 38, *Round*, 274-5.
¹²⁹ W.S.R.O., Ep. I/26/3, f. 9.
¹³⁰ W.S.R.O., Ep. I/37/3.
¹³¹ A.A.W., A. 40, no. 41.
¹³² A.A.W., A. 40, no. 117.
¹³³ A.A.W., A. 40, no. 93.
¹³⁴ H.L.R.O., Main Papers, 21 Dec. 1767 (Diocese of Chichester).
¹³⁵ A.A.W., A. 41, no. 132.
¹³⁶ H.L.R.O., Main Papers, 5 March 1781 (Diocese of Chichester).
¹³⁷ Kinoulty, 27.
¹³⁸ A.A.W., London Clergy Misc. 1812-16 (Poynter) III c. Misc.
¹³⁹ P.R.O., HO 129/87/1/1/2.
¹⁴⁰ A.D.A.B., Southwark Visitation, 1863/4, West Grinstead.
¹⁴¹ A.A.W., A. 40, no. 117.
¹⁴² W.S.R.O., MP 2280.
¹⁴³ I am grateful to Mrs. Eleanor Holmes, Dr. Tim Hudson and Mrs. Alison McCann for many helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article, and to Geoffrey Holt, S.J., Miss Mary Kinoulty, Justin McLoughlin, O.F.M., and Geoffrey Scott, O.S.B., for bringing documents to my attention.

APPENDIX 1

A LIST OF PRIESTS WHO SERVED THE MISSION AT WEST GRINSTEAD, 1671-1814.

1671-4	Serenus CRESSY, O.S.B.	1735	Philip CARTERET, S.J.
1674-82	Robert PRENDAL, O.S.B.	1736	Felix BARTLET, S.J.
1682-6	Peter Alexis CARYLL, O.S.B.	1736-50	Henry HOGHTON, S.J.
1686-1704	Thomas CHURCHILL	1750-4	Francis SHORT, S.J.
1705	Peter JONES	1755-63	Placid PAYNE, O.F.M.
1710-11	Ignatius STAFFURD, S.J.	1763-8	Paul DIXON, O.F.M.
1714-16	Charles CARYLL, S.J.	1768-76	Anselm COPLEY, O.F.M.
1727-33	John HODGES alias MASSEY, S.J.	1776	William FLEET, O.F.M.
1733-4	Anthony BEDINGFIELD, S.J.	1776-8	John PELLING, O.F.M.
		1778-84	William KNIGHT, O.F.M.
		1784-1812	Thomas COTTERELL, O.F.M.
		1812-14	Charles MCDONNELL, O.F.M.

APPENDIX 2

THE CARYLL FAMILY (an abbreviated pedigree showing the relationships between the members of the family associated with the West Grinstead mission)

