

In the article about Father Robert Hilton, it mentioned that he was in Cheadle Moseley in 12861 along with a Randolph Frith, who went on to become a Canon and the chief priest in the Edgeley area.

The following article outlines what it was like to be a Catholic Priest at that time and in particular what part Canon Frith was to play in it.

Stockport riots 1852

The Stockport Riots of June 1852 made national and international news.

The riots started as an attack on the Irish Catholics of the town by the local community and resulted in one death, an Irishman named Michael Moran, 23, several injuries, the destruction of 2 catholic chapels and several arrests and subsequent jail sentences. Michael Moran had left his brother in law's, James Hannigan, house supposedly under police protection and been hit on the head with a piece of wood. It was later discovered he had been killed by a fellow Irishman.

There was much discontent in the town when Irish families, starved in the famine, had come to Stockport looking for work in the mills. Their hard work was resented by the local community and there were many jealous disturbances.

At this time, religious processions which used icons or clergymen in vestments were banned. But each year, the Irish community held a legal procession, with no icons or clergy in vestments, for the children in the three local Catholic schools.

The Sunday before the riots, the 17th annual Catholic procession had taken place amidst the usual verbal attacks on the children by the community. The following afternoon, the local Protestant Association had held a procession carrying an effigy of a priest and anti-catholic placards. The Freeman's Journal July 3rd 1852 in an investigative report on the riots found that the children's procession was not the cause of the riots but that it had started as an attack on Irishmen in the Bishop Blaise (Lower Hillgate) pub the previous evening.

The Glasgow Herald of July 2nd 1852 however states that, a young Englishman shouted abuse at the Catholic priest watching the Catholic procession and when this young man went into the Bishop Blaise (then called The Gladstone) pub the following night he was a 'marked man.' This was the start of the riot but it seems that the town was a powder keg waiting to ignite. The Irish and local community were set for battle. Many buildings were destroyed, Irish homes on Rock Row were destroyed, Catholic churches were looted and destroyed. There would appear to be many causes; poor social conditions, racist Anti-Irish feelings,

employment problems, political agitation, fear, alcohol and an ignorant misunderstanding of what constitutes a legal procession.

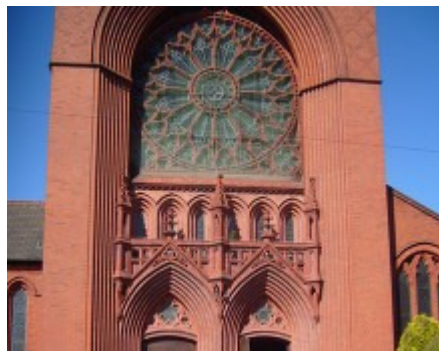
The rioters marched on the Catholic chapel at Edgeley intent on murdering Catholic Canon Randolph Frith who had to take refuge with protestant friends in the town. The house and the chapel were totally destroyed, and alcohol stolen before the rioters then marched on to destroy St Michael's Catholic chapel in the Park, a few hundred yards from the police station. The military were called and The Riot Act was read. The Irish community had to leave their homes in Rock Row and camp in Crookley Woods in nearby Brinnington for safety after this destruction of their church, and worshipped in the ruins of the Catholic Chapel at Edgeley. The Church registers before this time were destroyed.

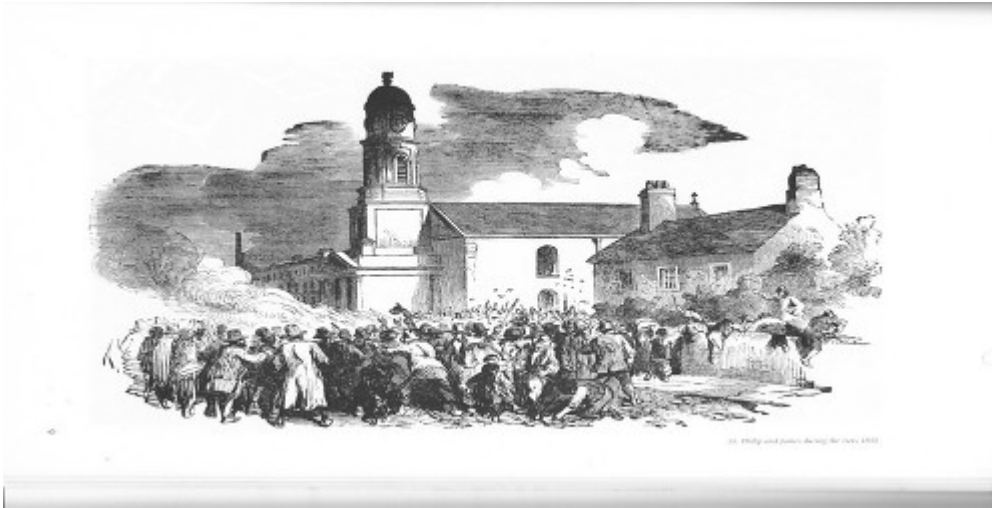
The Daily News in 1852 found that there was no provocation on the part of the Catholics. The procession held no sectarian symbols and was an expression of justifiable pride of the Catholics in the tidy and intelligent appearance of their children attending the schools. It was a display which in a free and enlightened state, all have a right to make.

The Derby Mercury reported the trials. George Pell, William Buttery and Mark Gleave received the largest sentences for incitement and attacks on Catholic chapels receiving between 18 months and two years hard labour between them.

The Freeman's Journal reported in 1852 that Canon Frith had arrived in Dublin with a letter from The Bishop in Shropshire asking for financial help to build a church to help the Irish Catholics of Stockport. With his usual zeal and enthusiasm, he had rebuilt the church named St Philip and St James within a year. The church is now called Our Lady and the Apostles and stands at the top of Greek St, Shaw Heath and Castle St at the roundabout. The names Philip and James were retained for future Catholic ventures in Stockport namely St Philip's Church and St James School .

Our Lady's Edgeley 2012





Source material*The Freeman's Journal 1852 / The Daily News 1852*
The Glasgow Herald 1852 / The Derby Mercury 1852
Our Lady and the Apostles 1799 - 1999

FOOTNOTES

Canon Randolph Frith was born in Sheffield in 1808 and was already Parish Priest in Stockport by 1851 on the census. He remained at Stockport until approx 1879 when he was moved to St Peter's Birkenhead before retiring in 1887 aged approx 78. He died in 1893 in Birkenhead.

Rock-Row was a row of hovels between Stockport Viaduct and Chestergate near Carr Green.

Matthew Mulligan was found guilty of the murder of Michael Moran and was sentenced to 15 years transportation.

*Fr. Michael Hartley was a Deacon at Our Lady's & The Apostles 1983-84

Universalis Ecclesiae was a papal bull of **29 September 1850** by which Pope Pius IX recreated the Roman Catholic diocesan hierarchy in England, which had been extinguished with the death of the last Marian bishop in the reign of Elizabeth I. New names were given to the dioceses, as the old ones were in use by the Church of England. The bull aroused considerable anti-Catholic feeling among English Protestants.