

Canon Thomas William Fryer

Thomas William Fryer was born in London on June 15th 1811, one of nine children six of whom took holy orders (three priests and three nuns). He was ordained on Christmas day 1836 and came to Newport as priest on June 29th 1839; he was Newport's priest for fifty years resigning in 1889, he died in 1893. During his time at Newport he said Mass all over the island and welcomed foreign royalty to Mass at Newport; the Emperor and Empress of France on August 9th 1857 and in August 1861 the Archduke and Archduchess of Austria.

It was during his time, also, that Carisbrooke Priory was built, he was closely associated with this and, naturally, with the Countess of Clare. In 1863 Father Fryer was, in addition, appointed Chaplin to the Western Forts, there being many Irish Catholic artillery men on the Island.

Canon Fryer, as he became, lived at the presbytery next to the Catholic Church in Pyle St, which was No. 105 until the Corporation change the numbers in 1870 when it became No 96. In 1859 a Catholic School, funded by W G Ward, was built adjoining the presbytery extending through to the High Street.

(The above has been taken from 'The Catholic Story of the Isle of Wight' by Canon Scantlebury 1962)

Additional Note. Newport's Catholic Church of 1791 is understood to be the first Catholic Church, specific to that purpose, built in England after the Relief Act of 1791 when Catholics were again allowed to have dedicated 'meeting places'. There were some burials in front of the church until prevented by an Act of Parliament in 1855.

Contributed by John Farthing for the Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries.

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