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# OKEHAMPTON TIMES



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PAGE 3

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PAGES 18 & 39



● THE Catholic Bishop of Plymouth the Right Rev Mark O'Toole was a special guest at St Boniface Roman Catholic Parish Church in Okehampton on Sunday to bless the church's new grotto and car park. Picture by James Bird. See page 7 for the full story.

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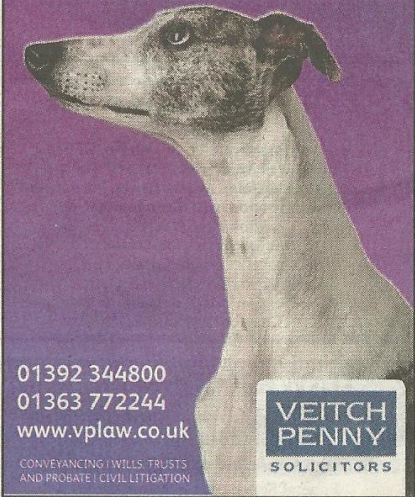
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# Abstract



# Church grotto is a blessing

THE Catholic Bishop of Plymouth visited St Boniface Roman Catholic Parish Church in Okehampton on Sunday to bless the church's new grotto and car park.

Bishop Mark O'Toole joined priest Father Darline Joseph to celebrate the makeover of the church grounds and new car park aimed at solving congestion problems outside the church.

Special guests at the ceremony were MP Mel Stride, Okehampton mayor Cllr Jan Goffey, councillors and other church ministers from the town.

Afterwards a buffet lunch was held at the Pavillion in the Park — everyone from the church expressed their thanks to Pavilion staff.

Priest at St Boniface Father Darline Joseph said the ceremony was not just a religious occasion, but a chance to celebrate the community's involvement in the project which has take two years

to complete.

'We had an issue with needing to take down trees which had a Tree Preservation Order on them, and people joined together and a lot of signatures went into our application so the project could go ahead.

'So although it is in the Catholic Church grounds, it is a joint adventure really with local residents from Okehampton and the surrounding villages. That's why we had a community celebration and invited these people. We wanted to thank them for their support.'

The car park was much needed, he said, to alleviate problems with congestion on Station Road outside the church.

'It used to be terribly congested,' he said. 'Now people can park very easily at our place and it looks very welcoming. In the past we have had a terribly restricted space for parking and it was causing trouble for residents

on Station Road, so this has helped them enormously too.'

Both the grotto, which replaces an earlier grotto dedicated to Our Lady, and the car park were made possible by a generous donation from congregation member Jim Egan.

Mr Stride said he was proud to be invited to declare the car park open.

'This much-needed car park that has dramatically improved the area, both practically and aesthetically.

'With the return of a regular passenger service between Okehampton and Exeter coming ever closer, Station Road will be busier and reducing the number of cars parked awkwardly at the bottom of the hill is a welcome move. Credit should go to the church and its congregation along with local councillors for persisting and making this happen.'

Picture by James Bird.

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