

**English  
Catholic**



**History  
Association**

Reg. Charity No. 1072269

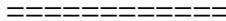
**NEWSLETTER**

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is open to all who are interested in furthering its aims.

Annual membership £11 with reductions for additional members at same address and students under 25

Membership forms and further details are available from:

The Secretary or Treasurer, addresses on page 3,  
or on the website – <http://echa.org.uk/>

## NEWSLETTER ARTICLES AND FEEDBACK

*always* welcome

Please send contributions to the editor Mrs Sheila Mawhood, the ECHA Publicity Officer at the address on page 3. [By email please and if possible saved with file extension of .doc in Word, photos in .jpg format.

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***West Midlands, North West England, Wessex and Wales:*** VACANT

## NEWS & NOTES

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- Greetings and best wishes to you all, members and friends of the Association. The Olympics have finished, the sun has vanished as I put the finishing touches to this the September Newsletter, so I hope our ECHA news will cheer you up as we slide into autumn. I have all of the details now for the remaining two ECHA events of the year
- There are still places available for the 22<sup>nd</sup> September visit to the historic St Anne's Shrine at Caversham near Reading. **Lindsay and John Mullaney** are our hosts for the day which includes Mass, one talk in the morning and two after lunch. See page 6 for all of the details. The booking form is enclosed.
- The Mullaney's have been in the national press lately. Perhaps you saw reports regarding the ancient Reading Abbey and King Henry I, son of William the Conqueror? Another king under another car park? Maybe or maybe not. Or *probably* not. John told me that he has to keep stressing that the main aim is not to find Henry's remains... "*and I have always been very sceptical about finding them, though it is not beyond possibility that they are still in the area. The GPR scan is still being analysed by the experts and we hope to get the results in early September, though I am sure they will lead to more debate. I hope to touch on this as part of my talk and of course if anyone has questions I will be pleased to try and give informative answers*".
- Our AGM and Annual Day Conference will be at the same venue as last year – in Bath. And will be held on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> October. Our morning speaker will be the renowned author, **Lady Clare Asquith**, and **Dr Simon Johnson**, our Chairman will be presenting in the afternoon.  
You will recall that Simon is the Keeper of the Downside Abbey Archives and Library.  
He tells us that Lady Clare Asquith's father - Francis Anthony Baring Pollen was the architect who designed the Library at Downside.  
Today Lady Clare told me that her grandmother – Daphne Pollen (1904-86), was the artist commissioned to paint *The English and Welsh Martyrs*. to mark 1970 canonization of the *forty martyrs* of England and Wales.  
This is the painting which is on the Home page of our website.  
See page 8 for all of the details our 22<sup>nd</sup> October meeting. The booking form is enclosed.
- We are always happy to bring other, non-ECHA events to your attention. We had an enquiry via our website from St Mary's Catholic Church in

Cricklade (first town on the Thames) about an event they are organising as part of the National Heritage Open Days Weekend Sat/Sun 10-11 Sept. It is an exhibition of photos, posters, maps and copies of historic and archaeological documents about "St Mary's along the Thames".

*"Would this be of interest to your members? The displays are about the 100+ sites dedicated to Our Lady - churches, lost Abbeys, Priors, Shrines etc. and covers 200 miles of river and 1000 years of history.*

*Heritage Open Days' website is [www.heritageopendays.org.uk](http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk) - you can find it under Visiting, then select Search events, then Swindon for the town, then the category is property opening/tour, then the type of event is 'faith' and there we are".*

Times are; 10am to 4pm on Sat 10 September and 11am-4pm on Sunday 11 Sept. For those of you with no internet access, I have copied the details from the website and they are to be found below.

It sounds marvellous, what a great idea.

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## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS GUIDE**

**Saturday 9 and Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> September – National Heritage Weekend**

**St Mary's Along the River Thames**

**St. Mary's Catholic Church, High Street, Cricklade, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN6 6AP**

Visitors to this medieval church, on the site of a Saxon gate chapel, can view an exhibition of photographs, posters, maps, notes and guidebooks about the history and legacy of over 100 places along the Thames dedicated to the Virgin Mary. They can trace a chain of "St Mary's" over 200 miles and 1000 years of history; through churches, lost abbeys & priories, shrines, colleges, hospitals and geographical features.

We illustrate architectural elements e.g. early stonework and fonts; medieval and modern stained glass; paintings, carvings, statues, wall paintings and floor tiles; and we link individual sites to major events in English history - from Saxon missionaries and Viking raiders; to the 'Norman Conquest', Reformation and Civil War; and to the Suffragettes, World War II and the present.

We illustrate the association of these places with historical figures: kings and saints; poets, painters and architects; and writers including Chaucer, Shakespeare and Dickens – and visitors might spot TV drama locations.

Where nothing remains to be seen, we use archaeological and other documents to

'recapture' the sites e.g. the Abbeys of Eynsham, Oxford and Stratford Langthorne..

Guides will be on hand to talk about the exhibition and Cricklade archives. There are handouts and quiz sheets for adults and children. Using hole-in-face boards, children can picture themselves as a medieval gentleman or lady. They can also learn about a 'day in the life' of a medieval monk. Event not suitable for children under the age of 5.

### **Opening Times**

**Saturday** 10 September: 1000-1600 **Sunday** 11 September: 1100-1600

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## **Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2016**

### **Study Day on Pilgrimage St Anne's Church, Caversham**

#### **Morning Talk by Lindsay Mullaney *Aspects of Pilgrimage***

Rather than giving a potted history of pilgrimage Lindsay will look at how the concept evolved from the earliest days of the Church, by focusing on particular periods. These will include the earliest accounts of pilgrimage, from the time of Jerome, how Pilgrimage and Crusade became inextricably linked from the 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and how the theme of pilgrimage appears in literary form in works ranging from Dante's Divine Comedy, Langland's Piers Plowman, and Chaucer's Canterbury Tales to Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. The talk will be illustrated with images showing how pilgrimage has been depicted by artists throughout the history of the Church.

#### **Afternoon Talk - Part 1 by John Mullaney *Medieval Pilgrimage to Reading***

John will talk about *Medieval Pilgrimage to Reading*, focusing on its great Benedictine Abbey and the *Hand of St James*. Reading Abbey has been in the news this year as the burial place of its founder King Henry I. The town has also received a Heritage Lottery Fund grant for work on its ruins. The talk will reveal just how much we know about the Abbey and its place in the tradition of pilgrimage.

#### **Afternoon Talk - Part 2 by Julia Feeney *The Caversham Shrine***

Julia will talk about the shrine in Caversham in medieval times, how the modern shrine was established in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and how it is becoming a centre for pilgrimage in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **The speakers**

### ***Lindsay Mullaney***

Lindsay holds a BA in French and Italian and an MA in Applied Linguistics, both from Reading University. Her career has included several years as a teacher followed by 25 years as an independent bookseller, with her husband, John, in Caversham. Since retirement Lindsay has turned to historical research and has become closely involved with projects aiming to revive knowledge of Reading's great Benedictine Abbey, dissolved by Henry VIII. Immersion in the Middle Ages has led to a fascination with pilgrimage in all its facets.

### ***John Mullaney***

John is a local historian, having a BA in History and Italian and an MA in Education, specialising in the History and Philosophy of Education, both from the University of Reading. It was whilst at Reading that John and Lindsay met and married.

John has studied and taught in Italy and England. In his retirement he has specialised in researching the history of St James' church, which is sited within the ancient Abbey grounds. He has written several books, including the story of the return of Catholicism to Reading after penal times and the history of Reading and its Abbey since its dissolution.

### ***Julia Feeney***

A retired head teacher of a local Catholic primary school and a parishioner of Our Lady and St. Anne for many years, Julia has a special interest in and love for the Shrine of Our Lady of Caversham. She has published a booklet on the history of the medieval shrine and the building of the present shrine in the 1950s.

**How to get there** – St Anne's. is 0.5 miles from Reading Railway Station, Here is the address - 2 South View Avenue, Caversham Reading **RG4 8RR**.

**Bus:** From Reading Station exit by the North Interchange and take the number **23 bus** (in the direction of Caversham Park (not Friar Street) Alight at the 3<sup>rd</sup> stop – Washington Road. Here is a link to the bus 23 route map and timetable <http://www.reading-travelinfo.co.uk/bus/services/23.aspx> .

**On foot.** Lindsay tells me that there is a new footbridge which makes for a pleasant walk from Reading Railway Station. Full directions will be sent with your booking confirmation,

Please bring a packed lunch. There will only be one hour between 12:15 Mass and the first of the two afternoon talks, so heading out to any local restaurant would probably not work

Our hosts are going to be looking after us very well with tea/coffee plus biscuits or **homemade cake** both on arrival and departure and more tea and coffee to have

with your lunch.

I enclose the booking form. Please send it off to Bernard Polack with your payment by **8<sup>th</sup> September**.

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**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2016**

**Annual General Meeting and Study Day – St John the Evangelist Church - South Parade. Bath. BA2 4AF**

The AGM will be at the same venue as last year, St John the Evangelist Church in Bath. This was a popular choice last year. Easy to approach on foot from Bath Railway Station and drivers can use the Park and Rides and get the bus into town alighting at the Railway Station.

**This year we will be providing lunch – and tea/coffee with lunch and on both arrival and departure.**

Following arrival and coffee we proceed to the formalities - the AGM and then our morning speaker will present. **Shakespeare and the English Reformation**

**Lady Clare Asquith**, The Countess of Oxford and Asquith is the author of *Shadowplay: the Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare*. Her ideas about sixteenth century code were first raised in *The Shakespeare Newsletter* and *The Times Literary Supplement* and her essay on *Love's Labour Lost* appeared in *Shakespeare and the Culture of Christianity in Early Modern England*.

In the introductory notes to her book, Lady Clare states that her "*interest in the coded writing of William Shakespeare's era began in the winter of 1983, towards the end of the Cold War when I found myself in a shabby theatre in a crumbling stuccoed building near the centre of Moscow, watching a dramatization of Chekhov's short stories. The venue was a long room with a podium at one end and it was packed. A group of KGB operatives hung about the door, our two minders slipped into the back row. It was immediately obvious that my husband (Raymond Asquith, a diplomat at the British Embassy) and I were the only Westerners in the audience.*

*At first the performance seemed blandly innocuous. But before long, we noticed that the actors were slipping in occasional allusions that gave a risky contemporary angle to the otherwise familiar stories. The allusions were too fleeting to alert the watchers in the doorway but they were enough for an educated*

audience to realise that the hidden setting was not nineteenth-century tsarism but was twentieth-century communism.”

Here are some notes from the cover of **Shadowplay**

*“A revelatory new look at how Shakespeare secretly addressed the most profound political issues of his day, and how his plays embody a hidden history of England. In 16th-century England many loyal subjects to the crown were asked to make a terrible choice: to follow their monarch or their God. The schism between the Crown and the Catholic Church had widened from a theological dispute in the reign of Henry VIII to bitter political conflict under Elizabeth I. Elizabethan and early Jacobean England became a land of unprecedented authoritarianism, a police state, fearful of threats from abroad and Catholic plotters at home. It was an age of terror, of summary imprisonments, of torture and brutal executions, of land seizures and the impoverishment of entire families. It was also the era of the greatest creative genius the world has ever known: William Shakespeare. How, then, could such a remarkable man born into such violently volatile times apparently make no comment about the state of England in his work? He did. But it was hidden.*

*Clare Asquith traces the common code used covertly by dissident writers in the sixteenth century to discuss the tribulations of their time, and reveals that the master of this forgotten art form was William Shakespeare, constantly attacking and exposing a regime that he believed had seized illegal control of the country he loved.*

*Shakespeare’s work, seen from this new perspective, offers a revelatory insight into the politics and personalities of the era. A wide cast of neglected political personalities and vivid allegorical figures hide behind the characters of his plays. Shakespeare trod a dangerous path, continually risking the fate of less cautious contemporaries like Marlowe and Kyd. Several mysteries surrounding Shakespeare’s own life, including most notably, why he stopped writing whilst still at the height of his powers, are disclosed in this utterly compelling combination of literary detective story and political revelation.”*

To bring you up to date, Lady Clare tell us that *“I am working on a second book due out next year. Many of my forebears were in some way closely involved in 16th century English Catholicism. My great great grandfather was the architect and artist John Hungerford Pollen, a close friend of Newman who converted to Catholicism with him and worked on designs for his Catholic University; his oldest son, the Jesuit Father John Pollen, was an outstanding scholar who researched and preserved many vital documents relating to English Catholicism in the 16th*

century; my grandmother, Daphne Pollen, also a convert, was the artist who was commissioned to paint the official 'group portrait' of the 40 martyrs for their canonisation in 1970. The family I married into, Raymond Asquith's, was also Catholic, also as the result of the conversion of Raymond's grandmother, Katherine. She was a friend of Daphne Pollen, and converted after the death of her husband, Raymond, son of the Prime Minister, Herbert Henry Asquith, in the Battle of the Somme. Both Daphne and Katherine, who were friends of Belloc, Knox, Martin D'Arcy, Vincent McNabb, David Jones, and many other mid-20th century Catholic artists and intellectuals, braved considerable hostility from their families as a result of their decision to join the Catholic Church.

*I had no idea, until I began, how much my own ancestors were involved in my own field of research!"*

I think that we can look forward to an informative and intriguing presentation

Next on the agenda will be your buffet lunch, to be followed by our second presentation of the day.

Dr Simon Johnson, ECHA Chairmann will be bringing us up to speed on the work he has been overseeing at Downside Archive and Library - a massive undertaking which has brought them into contact with more than the works of Thomas Aquinas and Papal Bulls.

A couple of items on the Archive website blog caught my eye and I share them with you now. They are culled from **The Daniel Parsons' Collection**.

So, for starters, who was Daniel Parsons?

*"The Downside Abbey Library collection of bookplates is largely compiled from the collection of one man, Daniel Parsons (1811-1887). Daniel Parsons was part of the Oxford Movement and had a lifelong passion for the subjects of heraldry and ex-libris, and over his lifetime collected thousands of book plates, book labels, and super-libros.*

*He published one of the first works of the subject, in the third (1837) annual report of the Oxford University Archaeological and Heraldic Society. However, he never managed to complete his planned magnum opus on the history of the bookplate, to be based on his extensive collection which was bequeathed to Downside Abbey on his death.*

*The text accompanying the bookplate images is based on the work of one E. L. Cooke, Bath, who compiled a thorough ms. index to the Daniel Parsons collection in 1908. Additional person detail has been added by students of Bath Spa University and ordered as a database here, to be used as a tool to aid scholarly research."*

**A letter by Pugin** (letter, bound in black, not reproduced here)

*“This letter, written by the renowned gothic architect and designer Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852), was discovered by one of the Archive volunteers this morning. Tucked into one of the commonplace books in the Daniel Parsons Collection along with press cuttings and scraps of paper, the letter concerns a meeting which Pugin was arranging after he had visited Totnes and Tiverton in Devon. Sadly, the letter is undated and it is not clear if the meeting with Parsons went ahead. Pugin mentions ‘tracings’ which Parsons had sent Pugin (there are many tracings of heraldic and historical subjects in the Parsons Collection, some of which have appeared on this blog), so presumably the subject was of antiquarian interest. As Pugin mentions Westcliff, Ramsgate, it must have been written after 1841 when he moved to east Kent. The black edging to the letter denotes mourning, so it may possibly have been written in 1844 after the death of Louisa Burton, Pugin’s second wife. A very pleasing find!”*

And here’s another. **“Miss McDowell’s First Class Lodgings at Lansdown. Falmouth, commanding fine sea views and near the beach”.**

*“Another little piece of ephemera from the Daniel Parsons Collection in the Downside Abbey Archives. Pasted into the back of one of his journals (for the year 1881), it is not clear why Parsons decided to retain this card. Perhaps he had stayed at the ‘First Class Lodgings’ which Miss McDowell provided - or perhaps he intended to do so (presumably the address is printed on the card’s reverse). One of the joys of working in an archive is ephemera such as this. It allows us to connect with everyday living and reminds us that material history is mostly composed of trivial items such as this, which none-the-less sheds light into dark corners. And who knows, this might be the only surviving example of this card to have come down to us!”*

I think that we can guarantee an absorbing and informative presentation from our Chairman in his afternoon presentation.

Going back to the Downside Library which was designed by Lady Clare Asquith’s father, I found this report on the Heritage Lottery Fund website – *“the library building is an important example of 20th-century architecture. Shaped like a lantern and rising up over six floors with double height windows the main study area is lit from within, which at night resembles a beacon. The building is described by Alan Powers\*\* as “a free-standing polygonal library with opaque windows, each level being different in shape like nuts threaded onto a bolt.” The project will include work to replace the windows with modern glazing of higher*

*thermal performance which will help to establish effective climate control, thus protecting the building and the collection it houses”.*

## **VISIT REPORTS**

### **Visit to Stanbrook (Wass) Abbey and the Church of St Leonard and St Mary, Malton, North Yorkshire 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2016**

Association visits too far beyond its southern heartland tend to draw modest followings. This year's excursion to North Yorkshire at the beginning of June proved no exception but the ten or so members who made the effort were rewarded with an exceptional experience.

An internet search for Stanbrook Abbey will, in the first instance, bring up images of a luxury hotel/conference centre/events venue on the outskirts of Worcester. Anything further from the rule of St Benedict it would be hard to imagine. Yet, there is reason to be grateful that the Victorian Gothic splendour of the former residence of the Benedictine nuns of Stanbrook has been preserved and, if the photographic evidence is to be believed, much of the character of the Pugin and Puginesque interior of the building has been retained.

The departure from Worcester after over a century and a half and re-settlement in North Yorkshire in many ways chimes well with the history of this Benedictine community. The new location on the edge of the Yorkshire moors has a greater remoteness than the cosier climes of Worcester. The nearby village of Wass has a population of about a hundred and doesn't appear to consist of much more than a pub and a red telephone box. The new Stanbrook Abbey sits on the 'bank' overlooking the village half a mile away. Ampleforth Abbey lies a few miles to the east.

The new abbey was designed and built on ecologically friendly principles and is recognised for that in the locality as much as for its religious/monastic character. Although the community is semi-enclosed, groups of visitors are made very welcome and the services in the chapel are always open and available to anyone who wishes to attend. The ECHA visit was hosted by Sister Philippa who organised the hospitality, delivered a scholarly and entertaining account of the history of the community and described the architectural and liturgical character of the abbey and its chapel.

The Benedictine community has an unbroken history, the destructive impact of the protestant Reformation notwithstanding, and, following the Elizabethan religious

settlement, the renaissance of Benedictine monastic life took root in the Low Countries. It was in 1623 that the direct predecessor of the Stanbrook community was established at Cambrai – a group of English women, including the great granddaughter of St Thomas More and a number of women from the Yorkshire area. There they remained for the next one hundred and seventy years until their monastic life was suddenly and brutally interrupted by the representatives of the revolutionary regime in Paris. The community was given seven and a half minutes to leave their home (an interesting footnote to this episode is that the clock at Stanbrook ‘pinged’ at seven and a half minute intervals). The sisters were then imprisoned at Compiègne for the next year and a half alongside the Carmelite community. At the height of the Terror in 1794 the Carmelites were condemned to death and as they were transported to the guillotine in Paris they sang the office for the dead, silencing the mob in the process. The Benedictines narrowly escaped the same fate a week later when Robespierre and his allies were overthrown in July 1794. In May 1795 they secured their release and a destitute group of nuns took refuge in England, firstly accommodated in Liverpool, then moving to Abbot’s Salford in the Cotswolds until finally settling at Stanbrook Hall in Callow End, Worcester in 1838. It was a further three decades before the completion of the house and the chapel there.

The beautiful E.W Pugin chapel at Stanbrook underwent refurbishment in 1971 and is still in occasional use today. The original Minton tiles were taken up and saved and some have been brought to Yorkshire to be re-laid in the new abbey. Another element of continuity is the colourful crucifix brought from the Pugin chapel. It was installed in time for the first Mass in the new chapel and coincidentally, but symbolically, was put in place at precisely 3.00 p.m. on Friday 1 May. The crucifix was restored by a local artist, David Everingham of Harrogate, and instantly draws the eye on entering the chapel – a splash of vivid colour over the sanctuary. The statues of the Virgin Mary and of St Benedict were also transported, but the latter has not withstood the harsher weather and the rigours of transportation. So, St Benedict currently stands, mummified, in the abbey grounds awaiting repair (or replacement).

It is difficult to do justice to the beauty of the new chapel in a few words. Ostensibly austere in design and construction, it is a marvel of local stone, Dorset limestone, Austrian spruce, sycamore and natural light from the tall windows looking out on to a pasture of grazing sheep. The artistry includes work by Brazilian artist Claudia Pastro (altar, ambo and baptismal water plinth) and Katya Filmus from Tel Aviv (the luminous blue baptismal water bowl). The liturgical

scholar, Fr. Dan McCarthy, had a major hand in the layout and design of the chapel. To visit the chapel was a most powerful experience, enhanced by participation in the midday office with the community.

The move away from Callow End had been under consideration for some time. A house designed to accommodate eighty nuns, by the time of the move, housed only twenty four. In the end the decision was made to start from scratch, purchase a piece of land and build a new abbey, funded by the sale of the old premises. As well as providing the community with more agreeable living conditions (every cell has proper en suite facilities) it could be designed to the highest environmentally friendly standards. So, the abbey now boasts a wood chip boiler, solar panels, rain water harvesting, sedum roofs, thermal insulation, low energy lighting – the list goes on.

The work is still in progress; the design for the library is not in place yet and the guest house has yet to be completed. It is worth paying a visit to the Abbey website to capture some of the pictorial flavour of Stanbrook or to make a purchase from the bookshop.

**Vincent Burke**

**Footnote:** Stanbrook Abbey has been given a Royal Institute of British Architects' national award for 2016 – given to buildings recognised as having made a significant contribution to British architecture. Here is their commendation:-

*“Stanbrook Abbey, a new monastery in the North York Moors National Park for an enclosed order of Benedictine Nuns, is a truly extraordinary piece of architecture. Having a blank canvas sometimes presents more problems than does a tight, hemmed in site, but to execute it in such a beautiful organic form suggests divine intervention. It sits majestically within the woodland, rising out of the ground to form the crescendo to the plateau.*

*Planning permission was by no means inevitable, but in the end the planners were convinced they would have an exceptional building for an exceptional client.. The brief called for a building that would enable this monastic community to ‘pray always’. The design aimed to foster contemplation through its simplicity, beauty, sense of space and tranquility, taking full advantage of natural light and views over the Vale of York. The layout is a response to both the site and the brief, allowing for privacy where needed and public access where appropriate. At first the nuns were interested in curving organic forms but the simple qualities they valued most strongly were best served by an orthogonal plan. The church and chapel, however, provide a more organic counterpoint to the orthogonal plan of the*

*accommodation, rising from the congregational entrance though to the high point of the church.*

*Despite their brilliant sense of humour, the sisters appear to have driven a hard bargain and they were rigorous in seeing that their brief has been interpreted and delivered with care and affection. The chapel has fully met their expectations in terms of acoustics and quality of light. The experience of walking into the chapel is truly uplifting. The building is a perfectly contextual form that simply grows from the landscape. Its straightforward palette of materials; oak, stone and copper, demonstrates a thorough ethos carried through from the sisters' brief. They live a simple disciplined lifestyle and the building truly reflects this in every element. The nuns' brief requested a monastery designed for the twenty-first century, economic to run and sensitive to ecological and environmental concerns. The building therefore has strong sustainable credentials. It relies on natural passive ventilation within the chapel, reed bed drainage, sourced local materials and simple solar heating for hot water, rainwater harvesting and a highly insulated thermal mass. The simple ethos has been maintained throughout".*

### **St Leonard and St Mary, Malton**

Driving into the town of Malton about half an hour from Stanbrook the skyline is dominated by the church of St Leonard and St Mary, given (returned?) to the Catholic Church by the diocese of York in 1971. The church dates from 1190, founded by the Gilbertine priory at Old Malton. The Gilbertine order, established by Gilbert of Sempringham in the twelfth century, was exclusive to England and so was entirely swept away by the Henrician dissolution. The dedication of the church to St Leonard would suggest that it was a place of hospitality or a hospital in the middle ages. Little of the original church has survived – the tower is very likely Elizabethan; the baptismal font is medieval. One of the unusual features of the church is its stained glass at the east end; the scenes depicted also serve as a war memorial.

The layout of the church would have been traditional Anglican, but the interior structure was such that the high altar would have been obscured from the congregation by the pillars along the north side of the building. In 1988 the layout was re-ordered, at the same time accommodating post-Vatican II liturgical changes. The main altar now sits on the south side of the nave in the centre of the church with seating arranged around it. At first sight this looks a little odd but it seems to enjoy acceptance from the parish and would certainly make participation easier. The former high altar now serves as the Blessed Sacrament chapel. Since the acquisition of the church various pieces of statuary and the stations of the cross have been added.

The parish continues to have excellent relations with the local Anglican community and recently hosted a visit by the Archbishop of York. The ECHA visit was hosted by parish priest Fr. Tim Bywater whose excellent talk on the history of the church was followed by a service of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. We are indebted to him for his kindness and hospitality.

***Vincent Burke***

## ARTICLES

### **The Centenary of the Archdiocese of Cardiff - February 7<sup>th</sup> 2016**

On 7<sup>th</sup> February 1916 the Diocese of Newport, of which Ross and Herefordshire were a part, became the Archdiocese of Cardiff with the church of St. David in Cardiff becoming the Metropolitan Cathedral. Ross and all of Herefordshire were then included in the Welsh Province, making it the only English county in a Welsh Diocese. To mark the centenary, this short history of the Catholic Church in Ross-on-Wye 100 years ago has been compiled.

#### ***Church of the Blessed Sacrament – (note the gas lights)***

100 years ago the faithful of Ross went to the Catholic Church in Corpus Christi Lane, named The Blessed Sacrament.

It was near to the present Sainsbury's car park and had been in use since it was opened in 1868, largely thanks to the Vaughans of Courtfield and the Benedictine community at Belmont.

Our local paper described the building as exceedingly plain and measuring 50 ft x 22ft. with a gallery for the choir above the entrance. The church could accommodate 200 worshippers. Service times advertised weekly in the Ross Gazette were stated as: Sunday Mass: (in Latin) 9 and 11am, Catechism: 3.00, Benediction: 6.30.

The priest lived in the Presbytery in the Crofts which was at the rear of the church. In 1916 the parish priest was Fr. James Barton Moore, who had been there since 1911. Following a custom before the Boer war, he frequently celebrated special masses for the local militia who were encamped on a site now known as the Haigh Industrial Estate on Alton Road.

Life at this time was dominated by events in The Great War, especially in France and on the Somme.



At least 7 parishioners served in the British Army or Royal Navy during the Great War 1914-1918.

**Clement Ross** of the Kings Shropshire Light Infantry died of wounds in 1919. He was a caddie at the Ross golf club.

**Lythel John Wilson**, a tailor and grandfather of parishioners Tom, Gerry, Sarah, and Helen Webb, served with the Royal Army Medical Corps.

**Robert Elliot Stavert** of the London Regiment was killed in action in 1918. In civilian life he was a railway clerk.

**Wilfrid John Massey-Lynch** of the Dragoon Guards was killed in action 1918. He had been a banker and later a farmer. He had married Gwendoline Harris at the Blessed Sacrament Church in 1914.

*Wilfrid John Massey-Lynch*



**John St. Clair Macmillan** of Weston-under-Penyard was with the Royal Artillery based at HQ in Horse Guards Parade.

**Charles Jerome Vaughan** of the Courtfield family served in the Royal Marine Royal Engineers.

**Reginald Schomberg** served in the Seaforth Highlanders and was severely wounded in 1916, but survived to have a long career as an explorer, author, diplomat, and finally a Roman Catholic priest. His home was in Walford Road, Ross.

*Reginald Schoenberg*



About this Jeremiah who was to

founder and first Parish Priest of St Frances of Rome, was a Chaplain serving with the British Army on the Western front. He had also been a Padre in the Boer War.

time, Fr McCarthy become the



It is likely that several women from the Ross parish would have greatly contributed to the war effort by working in the Rotherwas munitions factory near Hereford. Early on in the war Ross welcomed refugee families from Belgium, including the Van Gastels whose daughter Maria was baptised at the Blessed Sacrament in 1917.

Fr. Moore died in 1917, and was replaced by Fr. Robert Augustus Davis, a convert. Apart from his priestly duties, Fr Davis was a qualified architect, Ross Urban District Councillor, and Esperantist. He was also a supporter and activist for unemployed ex soldiers in Ross. He took a keen interest in parish history and was responsible for annotating the deaths of service men in the parish register, which is now held in the Hereford Record Office.

After the end of WW1 there was a great desire to build a new church and many events such as summer garden fetes were organised in order to raise funds. With the arrival of Fr. McCarthy in 1926 this project was given greater emphasis. However, a legacy from Miss Frances Mary Webb who died in 1929 ensured the necessary resources were available and the new church of St. Frances of Rome was built and opened in 1931

The beautiful altar from the Blessed Sacrament church is now used in St. Frances of Rome - a constant reminder of our heritage.

*Rt. Rev. Francis Mostyn, Archbishop of Cardiff;*

*Fr. Jeremiah McCarthy, parish priest of The Blessed Sacrament Church in Corpus Christi Lane;*

*and Colonel John St. Clair Macmillan attending a garden fete at Merton House to raise funds for the new Church.*



***With thanks to:*** Gordon Amand for compiling the text

*Wilfrid Massey-Lynch's daughter Lisle for the photographs of her father, and the inside of the church of the Blessed Sacrament.*

*Highlanders Museum and the Royal Society for Asian Affairs for the photographs of Reginald Schomberg. Ross Gazette for the Merton House photograph.*

## 2016 PROGRAMME

- **SEPTEMBER: Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> Berkshire.** Caversham near Reading. A visit to St Anne's Caversham and its Shrine. Mass, 3 talks - Aspects of Pilgrimage, Medieval Pilgrimage to Reading and The Caversham Shrine. . Refreshments - tea and cakes provided but bring own picnic lunch.  
Booking form enclosed.  
*Organiser: Bernard Polack*
  
- **OCTOBER: Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup>.** Annual General Meeting and day conference.  
**Lady Clare Asquith:** "Shakespeare and the English Reformation"  
**Dr Simon Johnson:** The Downside Archives  
Details, including venue, and Booking form enclosed  
*Organiser: Angela Hodges*