

English
Catholic



History
Association

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NEWSLETTER

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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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		Mr Nigel Parker

Address for Correspondence:

45 High Street, Stoke-sub-Hamdon, Somerset. TA14 6PR

☎ 01935 823928 **E-mail:** secretary@echa.org.uk

Web site: www.echa.org.uk

Programme Co-ordinators: Ursula and Bernard Polack (address below)

Membership Secretary: Mr Vincent Burke 16 Brandhall Court, Wolverhampton Road, Oldbury, West Midlands, B68 8DE ☎ 0121 422 1573

Newsletter Editor and Publicity Officer: Mrs Sheila Mawhood (address below)

Regional Co-ordinators:

Leeds, Middlesborough, Hexham & Newcastle Mrs Lalage ROBSON, Dunelm, Black Dyke Lane, Upper Poppleton, York, YO26 6PT ☎ 01904 794929

South East (East Anglia, Brentwood, Arundel & Brighton & part of Southwark): Bernard POLACK, 4 Woodstock Grove, Farncombe, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 2AX. ☎ 01483 421412

Diocese of Westminster: Nigel PARKER, 17 Salcombe Gardens, Clapham Common North Side, London SW4 9RY ☎ 020 7978 4329

Email: nigel.parker349@btinternet.com

Kent: Christopher BULL, 48 Reed Avenue, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1ES

☎ 01227 451139 **Email:** abtaurusreed@gmail.com

South West: Mrs Lynne HUNTER JOHNSTON, The Close, Hewelsfield, Lydney, Gloucester, GL15 6JU ☎ 01594 530612

Email: elizabethhunterjohnston@gmail.com

Northampton and Nottingham Dioceses: Mrs Sheila MAWHOOD, 21 The Retreat, Princes Risborough, Bucks HP27 0JG ☎ 01844 343669

Email: sheilamawhood@aol.com

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

NEWS & NOTES

- This newsletter is later than usual but it is not too late to wish each and every one of you a very Happy New Year, best wishes and many blessings for 2017.
- We are sad to report the death of Dr Kevin McGarry. Kevin served on the committee in the early days of the English Catholic History Association and compiled a valuable reference book – “A Reader’s Guide to English Catholic History”.
- Then, on Armistice Day – 11th November 2016, **David Pearce** passed away in the Hospice of St Francis in Berkhamsted. David gave an entertaining talk on Dean Incents at our 2013 Conference in Downside, and joined us on our visit to Stonor in June 2015. He was diagnosed with cancer in autumn 2013 and was given possibly a month to live but being David he continued to live life with enthusiasm and gusto (his favourite word). When a friend visited him in the Hospice, David told him he was excited about dying, and that his friend must tell people what was really important – love and beauty and joy. “I have seen the light beneath the door,” he said, “tell them!” David described his experiences of living with cancer in a book of sonnets – “The Street” Please turn to the Books section for details
- **Canonisation.** Mother, now Saint Elizabeth Hesselblad (4 June 1870 – 24 April 1957), a convert Swedish nurse was the Foundress of the order known as the Brigidine Sisters. In 1931 she brought a small group of Sisters from Rome to Iver Heath, Buckinghamshire to open a house of prayer and hospitality to all. *It was a small, timbered house of gracious Tudor style standing on the quiet Fulmer Common road, running out of Iver Heath, not far from Uxbridge, Eventually the house was enlarged to accommodate more guests and has an added attraction of a conference centre. The house (and the chapel) is open to all, welcomes all nationalities, Christians, non-Christians and those not religious at all and all those who seek a few days of tranquillity and rest.* Here is a link to their website <http://www.bridgettineguesthouse.co.uk/> Towards the end of WWII, Mother Elizabeth Hesselblad hid Jewish families in the convent in Rome where she was the Mother Superior. She was canonised by Pope Francis in June 2016.
- **Walking tour of Catholic Colchester,** The Colchester Museum Service has devised a tour on foot of Catholic Medieval Colchester which takes

travellers to the old Catholic churches and sites in the town, Also, they will see the outline and small amount of wall left of the oldest church in England, set in what was discovered to be one of the oldest Roman Christian cemeteries. Of great interest also is the Benedictine Abbey Gatehouse which is all that is left of the abbey site. I saw this on the Colchester Heritage website: *“..early 15th-century gatehouse, with flint flush-work, a vaulted roof and battlements flanked by pinnaced corner turrets. A narrow winding staircase leads up to the main room. The Gatehouse is the only building to survive from the Benedictine St John’s Abbey completed 900 years ago in 1115. Badly damaged during the 1648 Siege of Colchester, it was extensively restored in the 19th century. There are historical associations with Richard III and Catherine of Aragon.”* Jennie mentioned they have been able to have Mass offered in the upstairs man room from time to time. For more information on these walking tours please contact Jennie Guthrie-Stevens on 01206 679060 or jennies1@gmail.com.

- **Walking tours in London.** If you can get yourself into London on a Tuesday during January or February, you might be interested in joining in one or other of these Catholic History walks organised and led by Joanna Bogle. TUESDAY January 17th, **For King and Country**, a look at Westminster and St James. Meet 2pm, steps of Westminster Cathedral. Nearest tube: VICTORIA. TUESDAY Jan 24th **Smells and Bells**, exploring London’s Catholic culture over centuries. Meet 2pm steps of St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square. Nearest tube: CHARING CROSS TUESDAY Jan 31st **The King’s Good Servant**, walking in the footsteps of St Thomas More. Meet 2pm, steps of the Church of Our Most Holy Redeemer and St Thomas More, Cheyne Row, Chelsea. Nearest tube: SLOANE SQUARE, then walk/bus along the Kings Road. TUESDAY February 7th **Lift up your heads, O gates!** A City walk. Meet 2pm on the steps of St Paul’s Cathedral. Nearest tube: St Paul’s. *“No need to book, just turn up. We invite a donation of £5 per person, £3 for the shorter St Thomas More walk. Students, Unemployed, Senior Citizens: contribution according to your means. Children (under 16) accompanied by a full-paying adult: free. (Max 3 children per adult). Priests, Religious, Seminarians: free. (However, to keep numbers manageable please do not turn up in groups of more than three). More information: www.catholichistorywalks.com “*

VISIT REPORTS

ECHA Visit to Woodchester, near Stroud, on Wednesday 3rd August 2016

It is difficult to add to the comprehensive preview of the ECHA visit to the Church of the Annunciation, Inchbrook, detailed in the June 2016 newsletter.

There is a plaque in the church recalling George Archer-Shee (Terence Rattigan's 'The Winslow Boy', wrongly expelled from Dartmouth for alleged theft). He died in the First World War. His mother lived locally.

I also noted that in the Dominican cemetery was the grave of Father Victor White OP, the psychologist, who was the author of 'God and the Unconscious' published eventually in the distinguished Fontana religious books series. It carried a favourable foreword by Jung.

Mass was said at the conclusion of the visit, though some of us struggled with some unfamiliar settings of the hymns.

The coverage of **Woodchester Mansion** (uncompleted Victorian Gothic) in the June newsletter was less extensive, and the guide book plus the accolade of inclusion in Simon Jenkins' 'England's Thousand Best Houses' has left more scope for comment.

The mansion exists because of the purchase in 1845 of the Woodchester Valley by William Leigh. He was born in 1802, the son of a Liverpool trader, and was educated at Eton. In 1844 he converted to Catholicism. He had intended to finance a Protestant Cathedral in Adelaide, but, to celebrate his conversion, his gift of £4,000 was sportingly redirected by the Protestant establishment for a Catholic Cathedral there. Having also built the Catholic church at Inchbrook, and commencing the mansion in 1858, money was tight. However an investment in a copper mine in Australia proved lucrative and initially secured the project.

Pugin and Charles Hanson were possible architects, but this eventually fell to a local architect, Benjamin Bucknall, aged 21. He was influenced by the French architect Viollet-le-Duc. The house is very elaborate, and there was a rumour that it had been designed to accommodate Pope Pius IXth if he had had to flee, but the tour guide dismissed this.

William Leigh never lived there either, nor did the four of his children who predeceased him. Major work stopped in 1862. Leigh died in 1873, and his surviving son decided that continuation would be too extravagant.

It has never been completed.

Leigh's granddaughters prepared for a visit by Cardinal Vaughan in 1894 by redecorating the drawing room, and Evelyn Waugh lectured outside the mansion

in 1938. Vincent, William Leigh's grandson, lived in the servants' quarters; probably the only habitable part of the house. In 1923 he left this 'white elephant'.

A farmer then kept cattle in the dining room and hall. Later it was used by St Joseph's School, Nympsfield. In World War II a Catholic school was evacuated from Birmingham, the Home Guard used the house for training and American and Canadian troops, preparing for D-Day, fired bullets into the clock face.

It was left to Mr Reginald Kelly, a bat enthusiast, who maintained the roofs from the 1950s to supply some of the longest 'residents' and there are now about 750 horseshoe bats living there, rising to 1,000 in July.

A personal impression is that I found the external face of the mansion even more striking than its interior, and on a gloomy day it would make a good film set for Baskerville Hall.

Alan M Whaits,

Study Day on Pilgrimage St Anne's Church, Caversham, Reading. Thursday, 22nd September, 2016

Fourteen members and twelve local people assembled in the well-appointed hall of the Church of Our Lady and St. Anne at Caversham and after welcome refreshments, heard talks by three knowledgeable speakers on aspects of pilgrims and pilgrimages.

First to speak was Lindsay Mullaney on Aspects of Pilgrimage. Although the term pilgrimage need not necessarily have a religious connotation, the subject here is a spiritual journey through the physical landscape. The nature of Christian pilgrimages changed over time, partly through contact with other religions. The speaker asked whether Jesus went on pilgrimage – certainly, he "went up to Jerusalem" several times including, of course, the last fatal time.

Christian pilgrimage probably started in the time of the Emperor Constantine, when significant sites in Jerusalem became the object of pilgrimage. When Augustine came to our country in 597 he brought instructions from Pope Gregory as to the way in which existing religious sites in England, possibly places of pilgrimage for the inhabitants, were to be treated. The speaker considered the relationship between monasticism and pilgrimage, noting, however, that the practice of Benedictines was to stay in their monasteries. After the discovery there in 810 of the believed "tomb of Saint James", Compostella in northern Spain became a hugely popular pilgrimage centre, a popularity that has continued to this day. After the murder of Thomas Becket in 1170 Canterbury became a hugely

popular pilgrimage centre, and his shrine was said to be the most venerated object in all Europe, but that came to an end with the Reformation in the sixteenth century. In the mediaeval period there was criticism, and attempted reform, of the way in which pilgrimage had developed, and the Church tried to curb excesses.

Pilgrimage was so popular that it became the subject of three major literary works in the fourteenth century, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Langland's *Piers Plowman* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and, later, of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

The talk was illustrated with images showing how pilgrimage has been depicted by artists throughout the history of the church.

After Mass and the lunch break John Mullaney spoke about Reading Abbey : Today and Yesterday. Reading Abbey was founded in the twelfth century by Henry I. Much has been lost but certain lengths of ruined wall remain; these have been stabilised recently with the aid of a grant. John showed a conjectural picture of the Abbey in its heyday and also an Ordnance Survey plan showing the outline of the east end of the Abbey church superimposed on the present "landscape". The Abbey was a Cluniac house and, as such, had the specific aim of welcoming pilgrims, who came in large numbers after the Abbey acquired (there are various legends regarding its origin) a relic said to be the hand of St. James. More than twenty miracles were claimed to have been attributable to the power of this relic. By the end of the mediaeval period the Abbey was the sixth richest in the country, but this glory came to an end with the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539 and the martyrdom of the last abbot, Hugh Cook of Faringdon, one of the aims of the time being to do away with pilgrimage by destroying shrines. Over the succeeding centuries, almost all stone from the Abbey buildings (apart from the ruined walls mentioned) was removed and, eventually, the site was occupied by various buildings and gardens and a public park. On Palm Sunday 1909 an outdoor procession (unlawful at the time) was held in Reading, around the perimeter of the old Abbey.

John referred also to the recent interest in the location of the tomb of Henry I, who is known to have been buried, at his wish, close to high altar of the Abbey church. Survey work has been done with ground-penetrating radar, but the results were not yet available. John thinks that the tomb is probably under the present-day RC parish school.

Our third speaker, Julia Feeney, spoke specifically about the shrine of Our Lady of Caversham. The origin and exact site of the shrine are unknown but it is known that it was established in the twelfth century by Henry II, was looked after by Augustinian Canons and was the recipient of many gifts and tithes. Devotion to St. Anne (as the mother of the Virgin) was authorised by Pope Urban VI in 1378, but, over a century before that, the original Caversham bridge over the River Thames, built in 1231, had a chapel at each end, one of the Holy Spirit at the Reading end and one of St. Anne at the Caversham end. Around that time a holy well of St. Anne was established. The fame of the shrine spread throughout the country in the late Middle Ages, attracting large numbers of pilgrims and many offerings. It is on record that much gold and silver was donated, with the result that there was at Caversham a splendid shrine. This would, presumably, have been destroyed at the Reformation, and, by the eighteenth century, the exact location of the shrine was lost to memory. In the nineteenth century some French nuns were invited to come to Caversham, in 1896 the parish of Caversham was established and in the following year devotion to Our Lady of Caversham was revived. By 1902 a church had been built on land bought for the parish by a benefactor. There was always a hope to re-establish a definite shrine and, in 1955, a 500-year-old statue of the Virgin and Child was purchased and placed in a shrine chapel to the left of the high altar in the church. In 1996, to mark the parish centenary, a gold crown for the statue was made, was taken to Rome and blessed by Pope Saint John Paul II and is now in place on the statue in the shrine.

Our thanks are due to the three speakers for their very interesting talks, to John and Lindsay for making the “domestic” arrangements for the holding of the meeting in their hall and to Lindsay for the lovely refreshments. Also to Fr. John Pascoe for celebrating Mass for us; when asked to celebrate Mass, because no local priest was available, he said that he would regard it as a privilege to celebrate Mass at the shrine

Bernard Polack.

Annual General Meeting and Study Day – St John the Evangelist Church - South Parade. Bath. BA2 4AF Saturday 22nd October 2016

Morning speaker

Lady Clare Asquith, the Countess of Oxford and Asquith gave us a fascinating lecture entitled *Shakespeare and the English Reformation*. She is the author of *Shadowplay: the Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare* (PublicAffairs 2005) and will be publishing a second book next year.

Listening to her opening remarks I was reminded of the old quip which goes something like this: there were two ladies of a certain age leaving a performance

of one of Shakespeare's plays and one commenting to the other, 'I don't know what all the fuss is about Shakespeare, when all he does is string a lot of common proverbs and the suchlike together.' There are indeed parts of Shakespeare's work that we know and love, indeed some phrases and speeches seem deeply embedded in our collective memory. Who does not know 'to be or not to be, or 'Once more unto the breach, dear friends'? (misquote him as we may at times). We forgive Shakespeare much, said Clare, for the sake of these: we willingly sit through lines and lines of incomprehensible dialogue at the theatre, the sort of thing that Dr Johnson described as the 'unresisting imbecility' he found in *Cymbeline*.

But why did Shakespeare write such lines? Clare came up with her own theory whilst she was in Russia with her diplomat husband. In the winter of 1983, in a shabby theatre in Moscow she saw a dramatization of Chekhov's short stories. These were the days when everyone and everything was scrutinized by the KGB. The group KGB operatives hanging around the door of the theatre did not pay too much attention to the play and only those with an interest in what they were seeing, could 'get the picture'. Slight alterations and additions to the words made subtle allusions to current political affairs. Little pop up theatres, only announcing the performance on the day, could be found in Moscow in those days towards the end of the Cold War. Could Shakespeare have added similar 'current affairs' allusions in the midst of the telling of his stories. Clare thought it highly possible.

In his seminal *Stripping of the Altars. Traditional Religion in England c. 1400 – c. 1580* (1992), Eamon Duffy described the imposed political changes. Clare saw a marked similarity to the Russia she knew. The Elizabethan Settlement imposed changes 'from the top down' and there was increasingly resistance to the imposition of the change. She described Shakespeare living through the days which saw loss of the old regime and the 'birth pangs of the new'. There was the loss of our national heritage - something the Anglicans would come to miss most - the destruction of the historic fabric of ecclesiastical buildings. There was the loss of the social security network - education, health and almsgiving had been run by the monastic orders. Above all this, for those of the Catholic faith, there was the loss of the sacraments. Clare also recommended John Guy's new book, *Elizabeth. The Forgotten Years*.

She referred to the Cecils who controlled the demise of Catholicism by the use of law rather than the scaffold. By the imposition of the Oath of Allegiance for all public servants, including those attending university, it denied any form of standing to Catholics. This was the reason why so many Catholic families sent their children abroad for schooling. This came, of course, at a financial cost. Catholics also suffered financial penalties imposed by the State if, for example, they failed to

attend Divine Service. Walsingham's network of spies and informers further added to insecurity in the daily lives of recusant Catholics. The fear of Spanish invasion, or the Pope encouraging English Catholics to rise up against the Queen, further exacerbated the situation as regards English xenophobia. A mere slip of the tongue or an unwary wink, she said, was all that was needed to put a man in prison.

Before the reign of Henry VIII, religion and politics were staple subjects of the theatre. Elizabeth would tolerate some use, if it was sufficiently disguised as a tale of another country or a make-believe fairy story. Shakespeare and his contemporaries wrote with multiple layers of meaning in their work. Their readers and viewers expected this, Of course we cannot put ourselves into their shoes and know what they knew, but there are some easily recognisable flags. Clare took the example of Troy. Troy is traditionally associated with Britain and the siege of Troy can be viewed as representing the political and religious situation between England and Spain (*Troilus and Cressida*). Symbolism was central to depictions in art: classical allusions, for example, to Elizabeth I as Diana or the moon goddess were designed to enhance her position. Light and dark, high and low, good and evil would have been other recognisable symbolic devices. Clare sees Shakespeare using such symbols for Catholicism and Protestantism. It is now agreed that William Byrd conveyed hidden meanings in his musical works for his recusant listeners, she sees Shakespeare using similar tactics in his plays. Fellow actors, Hemyng and Condell, published the First Folio and in their introduction, stressed the need to read the text repeatedly and to study it carefully, thus suggesting the presence of multiple layers of meaning.

Shakespeare's familiar themes of tempest and shipwreck, splitting up of families and exile mimic the upheaval and unrest of the Reformation. But there are also much smaller insertions into the text. In the first scene of *Much Ado About Nothing* '6 July' is a seeming irrelevant date. But this was the date on which Sir Thomas More was executed and also the date on which Edward VI died – retribution on his father's action? The seemingly irrelevant scene in *As You Like It* of the foresters carrying a stag's head across the stage could have reminded the theatre goers of the crest of Sir William Stanley, a man who followed his conscience and defected to the Spanish in 1587. *Macbeth* has in its theme of equivocation, reference to Henry Garnet. Lady Clare Asquith gave us many examples. It would be folly to try to repeat them here, so may I recommend her book, *Shadowplay*, and suggest you keep an eye out for news of the publication of her second book. In the meantime, should you care to listen to her lecture, it was recorded and will be found on the English Catholic History Association website. **Gill Hogarth**

Afternoon speaker

After lunch, Our Chairman, Dr Simon Johnson, who is the Director of Heritage at Downside Abbey spoke and gave us a glimpse of some of the wonders held in the Downside archive.

*The photo on the opposite page shows Simon attending **Benedictine Bath 2016** - The Benedictine Bath Festival explores a little-known chapter of Bath's heritage. A partnership between Downside Abbey, Bath Abbey, and St John's Hospital, the series offers a range of free and paid-for events throughout the city.*

Downside Abbey sits atop the Mendip Hills in Somerset. Home to Benedictine monks, the Catholic community has been based in Somerset for over 200 years. Downside Abbey Church is dedicated to Saint Gregory the Great, and it is a Minor Basilica; it is also the largest of the Neo-Gothic style churches built in this country after the Reformation, and was described by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner as "the most splendid demonstration of the Renaissance of Roman Catholicism in England. If ever there was an excuse for building in period forms in the twentieth century, it is here". Monks and books have from the outset been close friends. The link that Benedictine monks made between the love of learning and the desire for God led to the part they were to play from the Eighth Century in the revival of education in the new Europe of the Middle Ages. The same sense of purpose inspires our engagement with culture today.

Thanks to the 'Beacon of Learning' project, we are delighted to be able to share our collections with you, please contact us if you'd like to arrange a visit.

from The Downside Abbey website



photo: reproduced with permission of Simon Johnson

A BEACON OF LIGHT AND UNDERSTANDING.

A presentation by Dr Simon Johnson, Director of Heritage at Downside Abbey, given at the AGM of the ECHA at St John the Evangelist Church in Bath on 22 October 2016.

Downside Abbey, the Benedictine monastery and well-known Catholic school at Stratton-on-the-Fosse near Bath has a universally acclaimed collection of volumes, manuscripts and archives in its notable library.

Dr Simon Johnson explained the progress and preservation of both the building and its contents. This was an interesting and enlightening resumé from our presenter, whose job title over the past seven years has evolved as well - Keeper of the Archive, Librarian and now *Director of Heritage*.

Not only did he discuss the logistics of the building itself but we also heard the history of the Benedictine monks, of Downside and many stories about individual items in their collection, all accompanied by slides. It was explained that despite the current climate of downsizing, it has become vital to preserve as much as possible of the library's contents.

History

The seeds of the collection were sown on the Continent when the Priory of St Gregory the Great was set up in Flanders by Benedictine monks from England and Wales between 1605 and 1607. Some of the monks moved to Douai in France to establish a school and others undertook missionary work in England.

The French Revolution, from which they suffered much hardship, saw property ransacked and destroyed and resulted in the arrival back in England of some monks between 1793-5. They settled at Acton Burnell, Shropshire thanks to the hospitality of Sir Edward Smythe, a former pupil. Upon his death in 1814 they found a suitable building with land at Downside, Stratton-on-the-Fosse.

By 1850, the Douai Libor held 80,000 volumes. A request for the retrieval of books left behind in France was refused by the French Republic, indeed many had been destroyed in fires.

It had been intended to build what is now the largest Catholic college in England with Pugin in mind but costs ruled this out and in 1876 the present monastery, built by Messrs Dunn & Hansom was opened.

Further expansion, including the Library was completed in 1969.

The Building.

The "New Library", now a listed building, was designed by Francis Pollen (the father of our morning speaker, Lady Clare Asquith) and was constructed in 1969 under the auspices of Dom Anthony Jebb, the Prior Administrator. The monks required it to be built in the monastery cloister but with public access. The building is in the shape of an octagonal lantern and is lit by large upper windows to satisfy Abbott Christopher Butler's desire for *a beacon of light and learning* in an environment of scholarship.

In recent years it was found that there had been some long-term seepage from the water table into the lower levels of the building with subsequent damage to some of the archived material. The necessary repairs and remedial work were undertaken with the considerable assistance of The Twentieth Century Society via a Heritage Lottery fund. Dr Johnson was appointed the project manager when works got underway but the project is now managed by an administrative team and he has been able to devote his considerable energies to his professional role – preserving the contents of the building.

We were shown several sad pictures of decaying papers which had to be

destroyed because of toxic mould contamination. Selling books or manuscripts or any archived material to fund vital restoration work was not possible owing to Benedictine Canon Law. So it was met with immense relief that the lottery funding covered both the restoration of the contents as well as the fabric of the library building.

The contents.

Although well-used, the library did not achieve its maximum potential under several early librarians. Later academics, realising the significance of the collection expanded the archive. It is now considered one of the greatest private libraries of incunabula, later volumes and manuscripts, rivalling the library at Longleat. Dr Johnson referred to many outstanding items in their acquisitions, such as the Edmund Bishop Collection.

Bishop (1846 – 1917) had been a resident scholar at Downside His donations included Henry VII's prayer book and an Ely psalter, a Bull Cantata which explains the ownership of Bath Abbey, a thirteenth Century bible from Paris and a humorous contemporary chronicle of medieval Scotland entitled ***Battle of Bannockburn***.

Some rare books from Exeter University are preserved there. Dom Raymond Webber, during two stints as librarian – 1913-34 and 1943-55 established a Rare books collection of mostly seventeenth and eighteenth work. Several recusant collections, mostly from the seventeenth century were received. A collection from Lamspringe Abbey includes the ***Pocahontas Book*** of Captain John Smith's travels, which is one of only four in the country.

In the 1990s Downside acquired the Gillow library. The Archive also contains the correspondence of Cardinal Pole, some from Sir Walter Raleigh, Montagne and works of Dante, including an early copy of ***The Divine Comedy***.

They also have letters of Charles Dickens and many Jacobite items, a bible used by Cardinal Newman whilst celebrating Mass at St John's Church in Bath, an item owned by Haile Selassie (which is loaned out during Rastafarian festivals).

It is an astonishing and *diverse* archive at Downside.

It includes many church vestments and altar vessels such as an elaborate Portuguese monstrance of King James II, donated by the House of Braganza.

Progress and the future. The Heritage Fund is now bearing the cost of the replacement of the windows in the library's lantern and the installation of effective climate control in the building. When possible and when recognisable, the destroyed documents have been listed and volunteers continue to help with conservation and cataloguing.

Donations still arrive with the Aylesford Archive to be added and any others, particularly Benedictine, such as Stanbrook will be welcome.

The **Downside Review** is used for publicity of activities and developments and loans to exhibitions such as one imminent at the V&A Museum in London, provide security of the heritage. Other current contracts include those with the University of Lisbon and with St Peter's in Salzburg where they are analysing the origin of animal vellum used in manuscripts.

At this time all will be thankful that such progress is being made and we are sure that Dr Johnson's current caretaking will be continuing the heritage for the long-term future.

A thousand more words would not do justice to the Downside Archive. So one will have to do – GO.

Hilary O'Malley

FORTHCOMING EVENTS GUIDE

As you would expect, our 2017 programme is still on the drawing board. More and better details will be issued in the next newsletter. However, we will open the batting on Saturday 1st April in Bath, at the Church of St John the Evangelist. This will be a **Reformation 500** conference. If you have not already heard of **Reformation 500**, you soon will. There are many and various events lined up throughout England and on the Continent, marking the beginnings of the Protestant Reformation, ecumenical services and lectures. You read it here first. As we go to Press, we do not have the timings or the name of the speaker but please mark the date in your diary – **Saturday 1st April 2017**.

We head out of town for our **May** fixture – to Little Malvern in Worcestershire. In our next newsletter we will also tell you how to sign up for the annual York Catholic History Day at the Bar Convent in York in **June**.

Later in the year we expect to hoist at least one event in London. We are hopeful of a visit to a *national landmark* (sorry to be so vague) and possibly also another talk at Westminster Cathedral. Last year's talk on the subject of **Priest Holes** was very popular. Watch this space.

MESSAGE FROM OUR TREASURER.

It is *that* time of year again, subs renewal time. The Subscription Renewal form is enclosed with this newsletter. Vincent has noted "*A number of subscribers who pay by standing order are still paying at the old rate. You should inform your bank of the increased amount NOW if you have not already done so. Please do not complete a new standing order mandate. Thank you.*"

It is also possible that we do not have your phone number or email address. If you have any changes to tell us could you please complete those details and send the form back to Vincent? We want to be sure that our records are up to date.

BOOKS

The Street

by **David R A Pearce**. 16 February 2016

ISBN-10: 1631830015

ISBN-13: 978-1631830013

Paperback 76 pages

Publisher: Mountain Arbor Press **£4.13**

The light may be dying but it is still light, and this poet makes marvellous use of it, not by raging but by talking. Distinctive voice, rich experience, masterly grasp of language and of poetic forms, he confronts death with life-giving verbal energy and witnesses to "what we'd wish to live again" from making marmalade to ingenious encounters with Satan and a deep, if questioning, awareness of God. Keep this book by you, for we are all on the same journey. From review on Amazon.

Catholic Bishops of Great Britain: A Reference to Roman Catholic Bishops from 1850 to 2015

by **Chris Larsen** 1st April 2016

ISBN: 978-1-910519-25-7

Hardback, colour, 396 pages

Publisher: Sacristy Press **£55**

was published earlier this year by Sacristy Press. This essential reference catalogues the biographical history and significant events of all Roman Catholic diocesan bishops who have been in office since the Restoration of the Catholic Hierarchy in England and Wales in 1850 and in Scotland since the Restoration in 1878. The work has developed over a number of years into a comprehensive reference guide to over 300 men, ordained in the episcopal order, who have given their life in service to the Church.

The book includes:

- A foreword by Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor
- Descriptions and a brief history of each diocese, including coats of arms
- Biographical details of all former and current bishops
- Translations of the Letters Apostolic
- Contact details of all serving bishops
- Chronological listing of significant episcopal events
- Indexes of titular sees and cardinal titles

Convert, Scholar, Bishop: William Brownlow 1830 -1901. 23 December 2016

by **Giles Mercer**

ISBN 978-0-9502759-4-9

Hardback, black & white illustrations, 610 pages

Publisher: Downside Abbey Press **£30** (available from the publishers)

Summary: This long-needed biography takes us on a fascinating journey through Victorian Anglicanism, Catholicism in England and Wales, Italy, Ireland, and missions in West Africa and Australia. William Brownlow's sensitive exploration of religious conversion (his own and others') remains stimulating. He was a scholarly, courteous, effective Catholic apologist. His many friends included Newman. His ministry in the Plymouth and Clifton Dioceses illuminate the Catholic Church in the south-west, especially in regard to education. His episcopacy, though short, helped shape the future. His historical and spiritual writings are given their deserved re-evaluation. Brownlow was best known in his day for publicising and interpreting the momentous discoveries of the catacombs in Rome. His zealous and practical interest in social teaching, the labour question, slavery, and child poverty are also engagingly assessed.

Endorsements.

This is a fascinating biography of a pivotal figure in Victorian Catholic life. I found it both moving and illuminating. **A. N. Wilson:**

This marvellous biography of Bishop Brownlow gives a wonderful account of a life well lived. Brownlow's education, his conversion to Catholicism, his interest in the early Christian archaeology of Rome, his priesthood and his tenure as Bishop of Clifton, are evoked in a way that is both scholarly and extremely readable. One learns a great deal about the debates and ideas, the enthusiasms and hopes, and the energy and resilience of the mid-Victorian period. This must surely stand as the definitive work on the subject, and it is a very welcome addition both to the history of British Catholicism in general, and of the Diocese of Clifton in particular.

Caroline Shaw, art historian, author of *Our Lady and St Alphege, Bath* (2012) and editor of *Racines Chrétiennes*

Like many figures who came to prominence in the period of the Roman Catholic Church's revival in England in the second half of the nineteenth century, for several decades William Brownlow has remained little more than a name on the lips of historians of the period – until now. Giles Mercer's magisterial study of this remarkable Victorian brings this distinguished convert-bishop out of the shadows,

and his analysis of Brownlow's life and career is as elegantly written as it is meticulously researched. Dr Mercer is to be congratulated for having produced such an engaging and enjoyable book.

Dr Serenhedd James FRHistS, author of *George Errington and Roman Catholic Identity in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford University Press, 2016) and Hon. Research Fellow of St Stephen's House, Oxford.

Giles Mercer has brought to life a little known Catholic bishop of the 19th century. He lets us hear a voice from the past which speaks to our age ... the voice of a pastor dedicated to the task of building up communities of faith rooted in the tradition while being open to the needs of the world around them and equipping them to converse with opponents with courtesy and respect. Here is the voice of a Christian humanism which dares to speak quietly and convince by its friendliness. **Reverend Peter Cornwell**, priest of the Clifton Diocese and author, most recently of *Prior Park College: The Phoenix* (2005)

2017 PROGRAMME

APRIL: Saturday 1st April 2017 – Reformation 500 Conference at St John the Evangelist Church, Bath.
Details and booking form to follow in March Newsletter

MAY : Visit to Little Malvern, Worcestershire.
Details and booking form to follow in March Newsletter

JUNE:: Saturday 3rd June 2017- Catholic History Day at the Bar Convent in York
Details to follow in March Newsletter